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Meeting James Earl Jones

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A MONSTER CALLS



OOGA CHAKA!

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Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana and more on staying awesome for Volume 2

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If *The Force Awakens* was the first step in a bold new era for *Star Wars*, then *Rogue One* has to be its first truly big risk. After all, there won't be any Jedi (not prominently, at least); it's an almost entirely new cast of characters, and we already know how it's going to end. Plus, what with the reshoots that have been going on, people have been questioning whether everything's okay with the saga's first official movie spin-off of the Disney era.

In our view there's little to worry about. This looks like the kind of down-and-dirty war film that Gareth Edwards has carved out a niche for himself as a master of. Add a *Star Wars* sheen that includes TIE Fighters, AT-ATs et al, and you've got the recipe for something potentially brilliant.

Admittedly we're biased, having spoken to Edwards himself – in addition to protagonist Felicity Jones and co-stars Donnie Yen and Wen Jiang – but since we're nothing if not sharing sorts, we've reported back with an exclusive preview of what to expect from *Rogue One*, as well as taking the opportunity to take a look back at the saga's past to see what the future has in store. It'll make sense once you read on.

On top of that, we have all the latest interviews with the stars and creators of the biggest sci-fi and fantasy hits on the horizon: two of Hollywood's biggest stars, Jennifer Lawrence and Chris Pratt, talk us through sci-fi romancer *Passengers*; the cast and crew of Amazon's breakout hit *The Man In The High Castle* disclose the shocking truth about Season Two, and director JA Bayona and genre great Sigourney Weaver kindly ignored our blubbing while discussing the utterly spellbinding *A Monster Calls*.

Stepping into the TimeWarp this issue, we examine the late great David Bowie's status as a sci-fi icon, chatting to those who worked with him on *Labyrinth*, *The Man Who Fell To Earth* and more; Tricia Helfer looks back on her many roles in *Battlestar Galactica*, and in keeping with the *Star Wars* theme, Mel Brooks' timeless parody *Spaceballs* gets put under the microscope in this issue's Flashback.

It may be a dark time for the Rebellion, but it has never been a better time to be a sci-fi fan.

Steve

Steve Wright
Editor

GET EXCITED ABOUT JUSTICE LEAGUE

We doubt that we actually have to tell you to get excited about what is technically DC's first big-screen group gathering (even though half the team already met in *Batman V Superman*), but we're going to do so anyway. Having witnessed Zack Snyder's behind-the-scenes wrap video, we're massively heartened by how much of a good time everyone looks to be having on set. Ezra Miller is great in everything, Jason Momoa looks like he's chomping at the bit, we get a whole movie's worth of Gal Gadot, and even Ben Affleck is cracking wise as the not-so-Dark Knight. The Red Capes are coming...

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Your first look at the next issue of SciFiNow

MEET THE TEAM

Q. Which sci-fi or fantasy squad would you most like to be a part of?



Steve Wright
Editor

A. Rogue Squadron
They may not be canon, but they're the best damn pilots in the galaxy.



Jonathan Hatfull
Features Editor

A. Serenity
I don't think I could bring anything of value, but they're so gorram shiny.



Poppy-Jay Palmer
Senior Staff Writer

A. Dumbledore's Army
My inclusion would mean that I also finally got my Hogwarts letter.



Jon Wells
Art Editor

A. The Guardians Of The Galaxy
I'd dance my way out of every terrible situation.

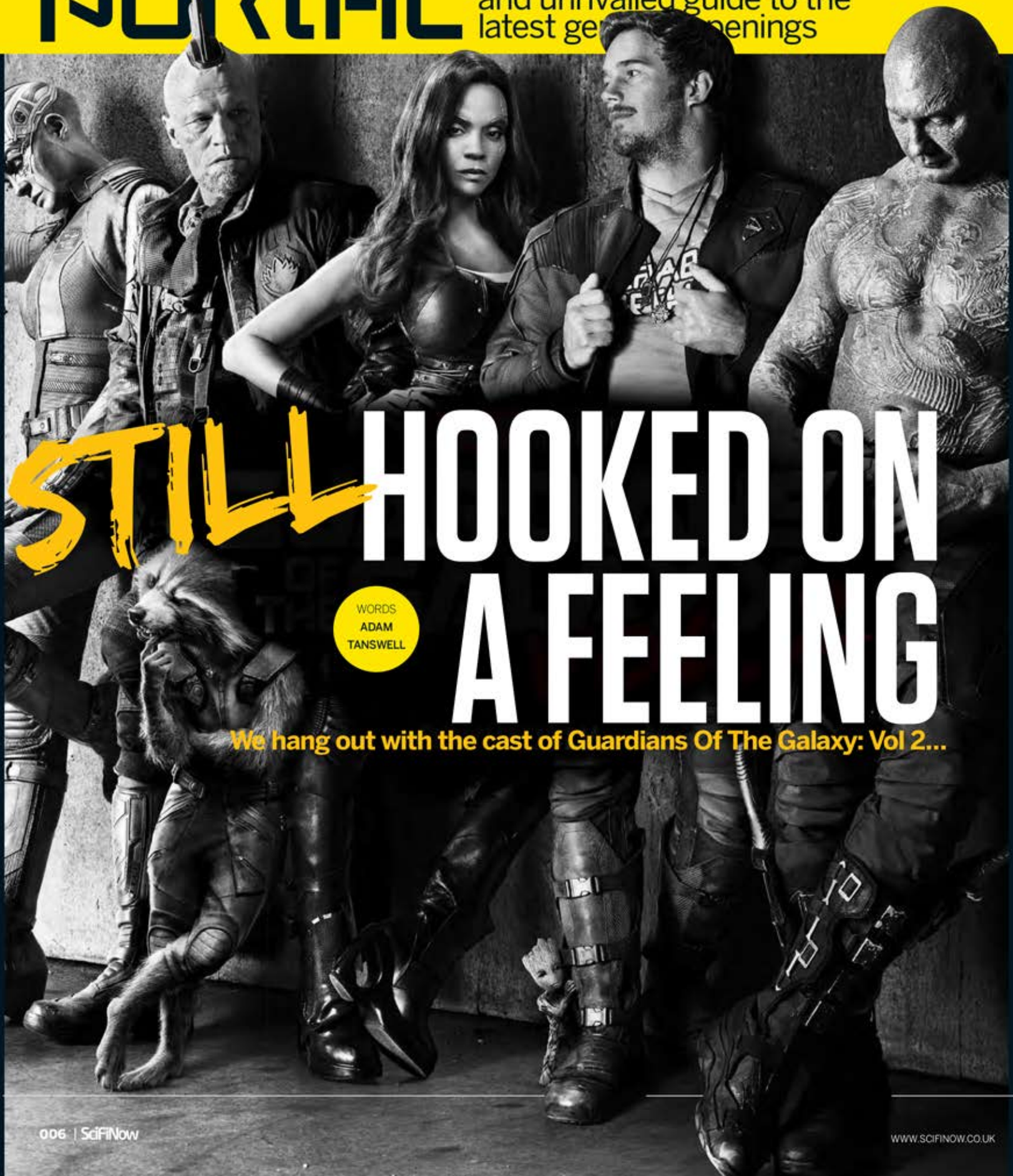


Jen Neal
Production Editor

A. The Scooby Gang
Battling vampires, demons and making terrible puns. Yes please.

Portal

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STILL HOOKED ON A FEELING

WORDS ADAM TANSWELL

We hang out with the cast of Guardians Of The Galaxy: Vol 2...

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Inside Sadako Vs Kayako, the ultimate J-Horror movie smackdown

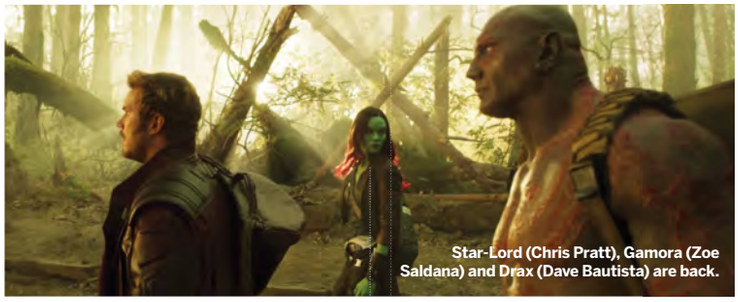
Guardians Of The Galaxy: Vol 2 is so close that we can hear the 'Ooga chakas' already. The wait has already been far too long.

While things started off a little rocky between the Guardians back in the Kyln, they're now almost ready to reassemble as an unconventional but united band of space misfits and probably save the galaxy once again.

Vol 2 sees the group's unofficial leader Star-Lord (Chris Pratt) embarking on a journey of self-discovery of sorts. After years in space as a sometimes-Ravager, oftentimes-womaniser and always-orphan, he's ready to track down his father, who might not be a human as he'd presumed. But even if his mission is unsuccessful and he doesn't find his dad, he'll always have a family as far as the rest of the gang is concerned.

"Well, he's famous now in the galaxy for having saved so many people," says Pratt. "What the Guardians Of The Galaxy did in the first movie, our movie picks up only a couple of months after that, so we're well-known now, and we're really picking up where we left off. He feels like he's part of this group, or not just part of this group, but a leader of this group. He's a little bit more responsible and trying hard to stay out of trouble, but not necessarily doing the best job."

Likewise, Drax, played by a hilariously deadpan Dave Bautista, continues to try his best without really knowing what he's doing. "There's not much of a time gap between the first film and this film, so I think if anything he's just more confused," Bautista tells us. "Now, he's surrounded by people using metaphors, and he's trying to figure it out. He kind of understands what a metaphor is, but he doesn't really, but he tries to pretend like he does, so there's a lot of confusion, which makes for a lot of good laughs."



Star-Lord (Chris Pratt), Gamora (Zoe Saldana) and Drax (Dave Bautista) are back.

After the immense success – both financially and critically – of *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, the cast were more than eager to crack on with the sequel. "Oh my god… the four hours of green make-up every day, waking up at 2.45am – it was a blast for us!" jokes Zoe Saldana, who plays Gamora, the most make-up-heavy alien of the group.

Make-up wasn't as much of an issue this time around for Nebula actress Karen Gillan, who had to shave her head for the first film. "They let me keep my hair, and I'm so grateful. There's an undershave… I have hair on my head, which is really exciting. I look like a female, Not a really long baby. I'm pleased by that."

Guardians has also acquired some new cast members, including Pom Klementieff as Mantis, Elizabeth Debicki as Ayesha, Tommy Flanagan as Tullk, Kurt Russell as Ego (Star-Lord's dad), and Sylvester Stallone in an unknown role. While this isn't the only thing being kept under wraps, Saldana is open about what the best thing about returning is.

"Working with my friends," she says. "We knew that we had something super-special, because James [Gunn, director] gave us the opportunity to be super-crazy with our characters, and coming back almost felt like we had just taken a summer break. This movie is going to have twice as much fun. They're super-fucking crazy. They fight all the time, and Gamora's become this old lady that's always like, 'Stop it, stop it,' so it's fun."

Guardians Of The Galaxy: Vol 2 hits cinemas on 28 April 2017.

THE NEW CREW

Meet the aliens joining the galaxy, and their human counterparts…

AYESHA (ELIZABETH DEBICKI)



"Well, Ayesha is the leader of this species we haven't seen yet, the sovereign people. She enlists the help of the Guardians, and things turn quite sour. I'm just going to leave it at that."

MANTIS (POM KLEMENTIEFF)



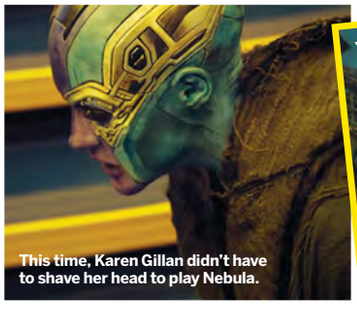
"I'm a new character called Mantis, and I'm an alien. I have emphatic powers, and I spent my life with Kurt Russell's character before meeting all the Guardians. That's it."

EGO THE LIVING PLANET (KURT RUSSELL)



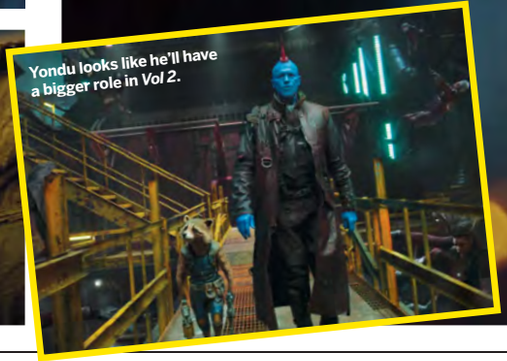
"I think James wrote a great character. I was really honoured to have the opportunity to play it. It's a great thing when you get a chance to play characters that hopefully you'll make memorable. If you can make a few in your life time, that's great, and I hope this one is. I had a great time with these guys. They're fantastic."





This time, Karen Gillan didn't have to shave her head to play Nebula.

> "WE PICK UP A COUPLE OF MONTHS AFTER THE FIRST MOVIE. WE'RE WELL-KNOWN NOW"
> CHRIS PRATT



Yondu looks like he'll have a bigger role in *Vol 2*.

Rocket has bought Baby Groot along for the ride.



DRAGON WARS

WORDS KATHERINE MCLAUGHLIN

We went behind the scenes on this year's big Christmas family special, The Last Dragonslayer

Those of you who are already looking ahead to their festive TV-viewing plans can stop now, as Sky1 will air their film adaptation of Jasper Fforde's fantasy novel *The Last Dragonslayer* on Christmas Day.

For those of you who are unfamiliar, it's a family adventure starring newcomer Ellise Chappell as 15-year-old Jennifer Strange, who is tasked with the unenviable deed of killing the last surviving dragon in the UnUnited Kingdoms.

Director Jamie Magnus Stone explained how they cast the leading lady: "Ellise sent in a self-taped audition, and we brought her in off the back of that. Before that she was working in a coffee shop in North London." He goes on to talk more about how he created the specific world in which the book is set, "It was such a fun world to flesh out. As the script developed we were able to develop and reinterpret parts from the book. I find it an intrinsically funny world where magic has always existed in the traditional sense, but nobody cares anymore.

"People are more amazed by microwaves or nylon. It's a lovely subversion of what your traditional fantasy world is. We ended up with one foot in medieval aesthetic, and that decided all our buildings should feel old. We skipped over the industrial revolution and went straight to 50s-80s technology."

John Bradley (*Game Of Thrones*) takes on the role of Gordon, a character who Jasper Fforde reveals, "Came about quite late in the writing of the book. I finished it and was thinking there was something missing, so I came up with Gordon. [The book] had been rejected like 19 times already." Bradley explains that he was drawn to the role of Gordon because of the differences between roles he has taken before. "With Gordon, you have a guy who's in possession of all the facts, and he's very confident in his delivery of the facts. He's got a kind of military precision about him. There's no grey areas and he's incredibly direct. I've never played anything like that before."

George Webster (*Tripped*), who plays Sir Grifflon, explained how he approached his character. "My instinct for him is that he was this sort of Justin Bieber figure who everybody really adored, but he's got this dark streak. His hair is magnificent and he's always signing things." Ricky Tomlinson (*The Royle Family*), who also appears in the film, had never worked with CGI technology before, stating, "It was quite difficult, because I've only just learnt how to text!" As a large chuckle explodes from him, he exclaims "Seriously!"

> "IT'S A WORLD WHERE MAGIC HAS ALWAYS EXISTED IN THE TRADITIONAL SENSE, BUT NOBODY CARES"
> GEORGE WEBSTER

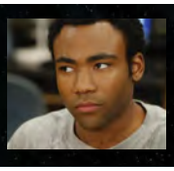
The design of the dragon Maltcassion was partly inspired by Vermithrax Pejorative from Matthew Robbins' 1981 film *Dragonslayer*, but Stone also says, "We looked at animals like lions. Big cats were an influence early on. Jennifer is meant to slay him and there's a moral quandary within the film where she, for lots of reasons doesn't want to and it feels like he's the last white tiger."

Richard E Grant provides the voice for Maltcassion, who Stone reveals "he had to wear a tennis helmet with a GoPro as well, so his facial performance is captured within the dragon." Should be interesting.

The Last Dragonslayer will air on Christmas Day on Sky1.

WARP SPEED

In what has to be one of the best casting decisions of the year, Donald Glover will play the younger Lando Calrissian in the *Han Solo* spin-off movie.



BLADE RUNNER 2 WILL MOVE FORWARD IN TIME

to 2049, to be precise, which is also in the sequel's title: *Blade Runner 2049*.



4

The number of sequels *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* will get.





FIVE THINGS WITH WILLIAM SHATNER

Captain Kirk himself on Star Trek's past, present and future

WORDS **ABIGAIL CHANDLER**

1 Unexpected hit

Even now, 50 years on, Shatner is surprised that *Star Trek* has had such a massive impact. "Nobody ever foresaw the continuing success of it," Shatner tells us at the celebratory 'Destination *Star Trek*' convention in London. "Every time we made a movie they burnt the sets afterwards so they wouldn't have to store them, because they figured there wouldn't be another episode. And it just continued, although no one could figure out why."

2 Life on Mars?

With everyone speculating about when the first manned mission to Mars will take place, you might be forgiven for thinking that sci-fi actors in particular would been keen to give outer space a go for real. Not Shatner. "What kind of a mind, what kind of a life does that require, for someone to say, 'I'm going to get into this spaceship and go to Mars… on this lonely voyage that has never been done before by a human being.' Wow. Not me."

3 Young guns of NASA

Shatner has made documentaries about *Star Trek* before, including *Get A Life!* and *The Captains*, but now he wants to apply his documentarian skills to the real science behind space travel. "I'm hopeful of selling a documentary I'm calling *Young Guns Of NASA*, looking at the young scientists who bring new ideas and new concepts. I [also] have a special I've been working on that'll be out in December called *The Truth Is In Our Stars*, and in it I talk to a lot of famous astrophysicists, ending with Dr Stephen Hawking. I was in Cambridge a few months ago, and I talked to Stephen Hawking about what's out there, what do we know. We don't know *anything*."

4 The joy of sci-fi

Shatner has his own theories on why *Star Trek* is popular, and one of them is that science fiction simply cannot be proven wrong. "A science fiction writer will imagine what will be, and you can't say that writer is wrong, because none of us know what the next moment will entail, let alone 300 years from now." He doesn't think we should be limited in our thoughts, "When we've examined quantum physics, we see that what's in quantum is so bizarre that it beggars anything that you can imagine. So anything that you can imagine might very well be out there."

5 Technological problems

He has a complex relationship with technology, viewing it as both destroyer and saviour. "Technology has really gotten us into a real mess in terms of ecology and the condition of the world, and it's going to be up to technology to get us out of it. Now that we're aware of the effect mankind has on nature, we have to mitigate that effect, and only technology and people's awareness can help us."

Star Trek: Discovery will air on Netflix in May 2017.

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WORDS **ABIGAIL CHANDLER**

WHERE NO FAN HAS GONE BEFORE...

With 50th anniversary year in full swing, we report back from Destination Star Trek...

Birmingham might not be the first place you'd think of for an intergalactic celebration, but that's where *Star Trek* fans headed to celebrate the 50th anniversary at Destination *Star Trek* at the NEC.

The convention took place over three days from the 7-9 October, and featured a host of stars from across the various TV shows and films, including George Takei, Walter Koenig, Marina Sirtis, Wil Wheaton, Terry Farrell, Alexander Siddig and William Shatner.

It seems remarkable that a series that didn't do especially well on release could still be thriving 50 years later, with films riding high in the box office and a new TV series coming next year. During the convention, representatives of the Guinness World Records handed the cast certificates confirming that *Star Trek* is the most successful sci-fi franchise of all time, worth an estimated $6 billion. If you consider that Disney paid $4 billion for *Star Wars*, perhaps it finally puts to rest the argument about which franchise is better.

Large parts of the convention hall – big enough to fit multiple football pitches – were given over to areas for signings and photoshoots, but there were also numerous merchandise stands, an art gallery of 50 pieces of *Star Trek* art (including a piece by Leonard Nimoy, a respected photographer as well as actor), and some great spots for photo ops. We couldn't resist breaking out the Picard and Kirk poses on the *Next Generation* and *Original Series* bridges, and there was a Klingon bridge too if you felt like being slightly more villainous.

There was even a My 3D Twin stand, where cosplayers could get a full body scan of themselves turned into an action figure. And there were certainly a lot of cosplayers there – the convention set the world record for the highest number of people in *Star Trek* costumes in one place,







Stars like George Takei (top) and William Shatner were correct and present.



Godzilla 2 has added *Krampus* writers Michael Dougherty and Zach Shields to spread festive fear.

3 The number of directors the *Uncharted* film had before it finally discovered Shawn Levy.

Star Trek Beyond director Justin Lin can't get enough of cool cars. To prove it, he has signed up to helm a *Knight Rider* reboot for NBC.



DEADPOOL 2

The winning formula has been meddled with, as *Deadpool* director Tim Miller has exited the sequel. Sad faces all round.







hitting over 1,100. The cosplayers ranged vastly in age and background, with the youngest Trekkies not even old enough to support their own heads yet.

Shatner suggested on stage that the reason for *Star Trek*'s success lands squarely with the fans, who have created a sort of religion around the show. "There's a mythology in science fiction that wishes to explain all that mystery in the universe that is inexplicable, much like religion seeks to explain why we're here and what happens after we die," he said. "But it's all done through speculation. And like religion, which has ritual, science fiction mythology has the ritual of coming to these conventions, taking pictures and wearing the uniforms, all participating in the ritual of this science fiction mythology."

In these troubled political times, many of the *Star Trek* cast praised the way the franchise presents a unified and positive future for the human race. Dominic Keating, who played Malcolm Reed in *Star Trek: Enterprise*, said, "The idea of building walls and becoming isolated at this point in human history is just not right. We're on the wrong side of what's actually going to happen in the end. That's why this show's so successful, because it's not about [building walls], and it never will be."

Adam Dolphin, member of the USS Iceni *Star Trek* fan club, told us that the morals are what draw the fans in. "It's because of how it represents the future," he said when asked what he loves about the show. "It doesn't matter what race or what creed you are, we all join together. And with *Star Trek* fans, we don't discriminate. When you see everybody in *Star Trek* uniforms, it's a different atmosphere. We all join together."

The convention wasn't without some minor controversy, and *The Next Generation* star Marina Sirtis drew cheers when she explained why she would never go to Mars. "I truly believe that the money we spend on the space programme – billions of dollars in America – is a little unethical when there are children going to bed hungry and illiterate and we have so many problems socially. I know *Star Trek* is the wrong show to be on to say this, but I believe that we could really use that money now for children and people who need it."

The last word on *Star Trek*'s success should go to Captain Kirk himself, and William Shatner was stunned when someone asked him what he would change about *Star Trek*. "50 years ago the *Star Trek* I did went on the air, and 50 years later, a lifetime later, we're still talking about it… How could you possibly be so callow as to believe you could change something? So no, I would not change anything, it might interfere with this longevity."



***Star Trek* icons past and present were in attendance.**

LIVE LONG AND PROSPER

Adam Nimoy tells us about celebrating his father in For The Love Of Spock

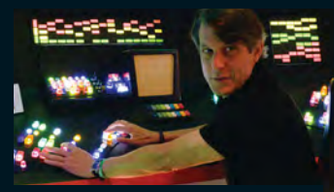
WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

The impact that Leonard Nimoy had cannot be overstated, both in character as Spock and out, so *Star Trek* fans cannot afford to miss out on this new documentary. Directed by his son, Adam, it's an affectionate but honest portrait that began as something the Nimoys would be doing together.

"I approached him with an idea of creating something together to celebrate Mr Spock," Adam Nimoy tells us. "He was very enthusiastic about getting into the project and reliving his memories of the creation and evolution of Spock, why he continued to resonate with fans all over the world. Until he died, the focus was going to be on a documentary that was solely about Spock – and that clearly had to change after he passed away."

Interviewees range from Nimoy's fellow cast and NASA engineers who he inspired to the crew of the new *Trek* movies, but it also looks at the actor's home life. "It's a film about the Spock story, the legacy of Leonard Nimoy the artist, and the story of a father and son who had to work to reconnect and find each other," explains Nimoy.

Perhaps most importantly, this is a film that understands his importance to the fans. "We're creating something for the community," he explains. "This is a film that grieves for the loss of my father, but it's a celebration of [his] legacy."



Adam Nimoy revisits the Enterprise at the Star Trek: Las Vegas convention.

© Kevin Layne / 455 Films



For the Love Of Spock is available on Blu-ray now.

> "IT'S THE STORY OF A FATHER AND SON WHO HAD TO RECONNECT AND FIND EACH OTHER"
> ADAM NIMOY



© Nimoy Archive / CBS

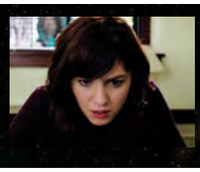


© Nimoy Archive / CBS, Modern photo & artwork courtesy Kaide Mello / 455 Films



Colin Firth joined the cast of *Mary Poppins Returns* as the bank's president, William Weatherall Wilkins.

3 The number of Willy Wonkas to star in their own films after the 'early adventures' movie David Heyman currently has in the works.



Braindead, the Mary Elizabeth Winstead White House alien parasite comedy, has been cancelled after one season.

CAPTAIN PLANET

Leonardo DiCaprio and Glen Powell are recycling the hero for a big-screen adventure.



6 THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT LOGAN

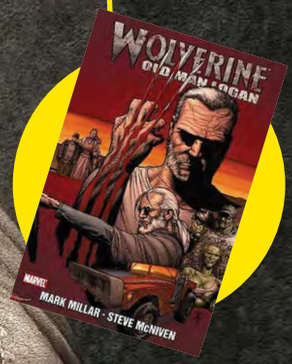
Before hanging up his claws, Wolverine returns one last time. Snikt

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**



IT'S BASED ON OLD MAN LOGAN

The eight-issue storyline the film is based on sees Logan as an old man, which follows an aged, guilt-ridden Logan who is revealed to have killed the other X-Men under mind control. It's unclear whether that has made it to the film, but the levels of angst in the trailer point to 'yes, yes, it has.'



STEPHEN MERCHANT IS CALIBAN

The 'old Logan' thing means all the other characters are older now too. Naturally, that also means recasting Caliban, whose young self made a brief appearance in *X-Men: Apocalypse*. A very creepy Stephen Merchant is taking over the role as the villainous scavenger with mutant-tracking abilities.



X-23 IS IN IT

As soon as the trailer was released, every Wolverine fan under the sun started to freak out (in a good way, of course) that the little girl (Sienna Novikov) that featured in it could be Laura Kinney, aka X-23, aka the clone-daughter of Wolverine. X-23's inclusion has now been confirmed.



DEATH, DEATH EVERYWHERE

The angst levels are kicked up a notch in the trailer, with Logan chugging a bottle of booze in a cemetery. But who's under the ground? Logan's former teammates? And then there's the shot of Logan and X-23 digging a grave at the end.

IT'S RATED 'R'

Violence! Sex! Strong language! That's what we're hoping for with the film's R rating. But from the look of the trailer, most of the restrictedness comes from flat-out violence, like Logan punching his claws through people's skulls (mainly the cyborg Reavers). Not that we're complaining or anything.



LOGAN IS GETTING OLD

Yes, yes, *Old Man Logan* and what not. But perhaps with ages come diminished powers. There are a couple of instances where he seems slower than he once was, not to mention he's also sporting cuts and bruises, even though he's got his healing factor.

Logan is in cinemas from 2 March 2017.



The Expanse has a UK home on Netflix, and is out now. Better late than never.

8 The number of new cast members to have joined *The Punisher*, including Ben Barnes, Ebon Moss-Bachrach and Amber Rose Revah.

Alita: Battle Angel has added *X-Men: Apocalypse*'s Jubilee, Lana Condor, to its cast. Maybe she'll get more screen time.



Teen Wolf creator Jeff Davis and his writer colleague Andrew Cochran are setting up camp elsewhere at MTV HQ with a brand new *War Of The Worlds* TV series.

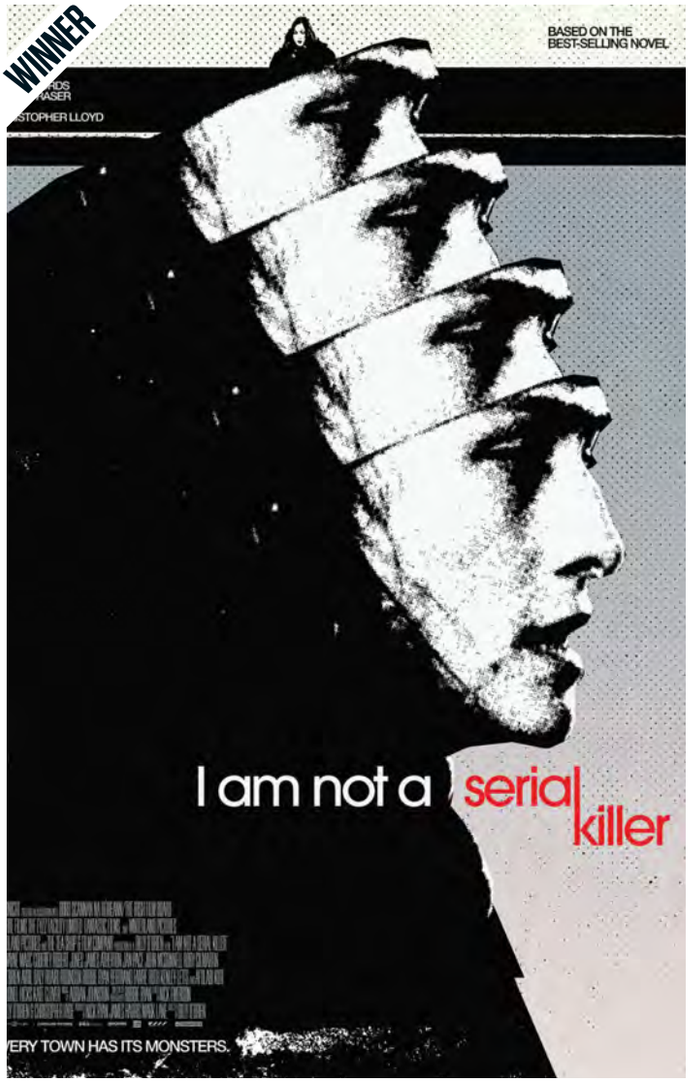


BEST OF THE BILLBOARDS

Celebrating the best, worst and weirdest movie posters out there

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

WINNER



I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER

It doesn't tell us much about the film itself, but it doesn't matter. We immediately want to see it based purely on how cool the poster is (and the title). Look at the layers, textures and detail! It's the pulp crime fiction book cover of our dreams, only in film poster form.

RUNNER UP



DOCTOR STRANGE

This IMAX poster with art by Randal Roberts is everything we dreamed a *Doctor Strange* poster could be. It's loud, detailed and trippy as hell.

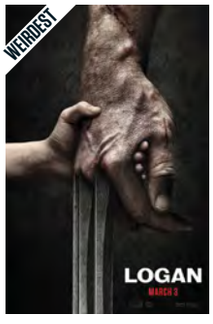
RUNNER UP



SHUT IN

The French poster for horror-thriller *Shut In*, starring Naomi Watts and Jacob Tremblay, is giving us some serious Fritz Lang vibes. Nice one.

WEIRDEST



LOGAN

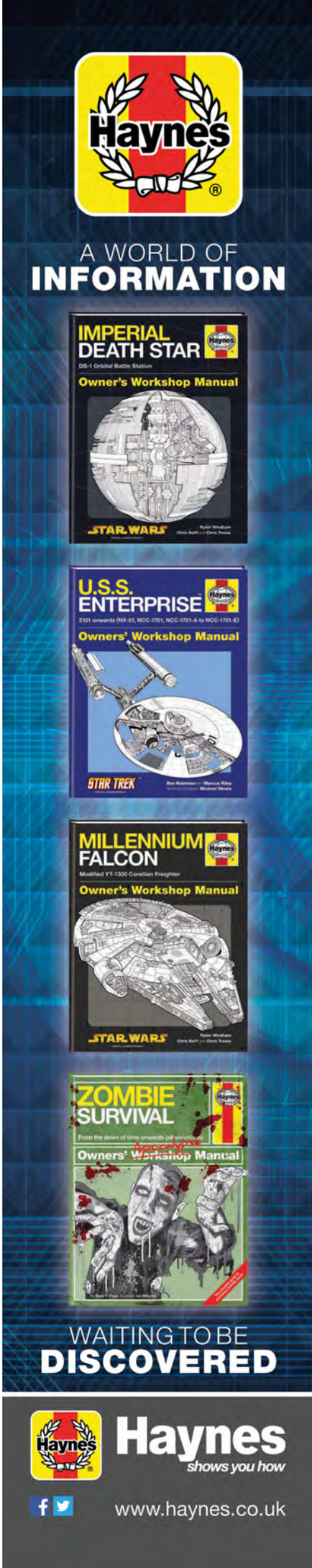
It's pretty standard as far as posters go, both in concept and the font choice. What's weird about it is how we're sure we're not the only ones that lost their minds when it was released. It's Wolverine holding the hand of a tiny child! Look at the size difference! How could anyone not flip out over that?

MOST EMO



RECOVERY

What is this, *Recovery*'s Bebo profile avatar from the early Noughties? There is a universe in which this poster is both cool and scary, but that universe is stuck in 2005. Any emo could easily recreate it in their bedroom with the contents of their wardrobe and a Sony Ericsson camera phone. In fact, they could probably just rifle back through their old photos on said Bebo account to recreate the poster right now.





MEMORY BANK

Welcome to Memory Bank, a magical place where we flick through old copies from the **SciFiNow** archives (ie: a dusty, overflowing bookcase) and see what we got right, what we got wrong, and what we completely forgot existed until just now.

One person we certainly haven't forgotten, and probably never will, is the cover star of issue 55, Chris Evans, who has only got bigger, both in profile and in physical size, since *Captain America: The First Avenger* hit cinemas back in 2011.

The same can't be said for Ryan Reynolds' turn as Hal Jordan in *Green Lantern*, which most people have deleted from their memories. "It's not about losing elements that don't work for a 21st-century audience," said screenwriter Marc Guggenheim. "It's about taking those elements and giving them a 21st-century spin." Sure Marc, okay. Reynolds himself seems to be doing pretty well now, so we won't worry too much about him.

On a similar note, we had a look at whether the *X-Men* films were in peril. At the time, *The Wolverine* had just lost a director, and *Deadpool* had just gained one. However, the latter was being delayed, no thanks to Reynolds' commitment to *Green Lantern* again. It keeps spoiling everything!

Cowboys & Aliens was also a thing. "I just liked the idea from the comic that the aliens were to the cowboys what the cowboys were to the indigenous population," director Jon Favreau told us. "I think there's an interesting aspect to that irony."

We also spoke to the geek elite, Simon Pegg and Nick Frost, about their then-new film *Paul*, and their cultural icons. "I try not to watch TV now apart from boxsets," said Frost, "because it makes me so terribly angry and depressed."

STEVE DILLON: 1962-2016

Remembering the legendary Preacher artist

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**



© AnthonyDillon

On 22 October, comic-book artist Steve Dillon passed away at the age of 54, leaving behind an incredible legacy.

Dillon was best known for co-creating the brilliant Vertigo series *Preacher* with his regular collaborator Garth Ennis, and his artwork on the series was never less than stellar. He could be depended on to perfectly bring the moments of strange and unusual violence that peppered the 65-issue series to life, as well as the romance and tenderness that was its heart, not to mention the epic landscape of the American west.

His work on 2000AD – *Judge Dredd* in particular – has been rightly celebrated as some of the best that the character ever enjoyed, and *Doctor Who* fans will tell you that his artwork for *Doctor Who Magazine*, where he co-created crazed Dalek hunter Abslom Daak, was superb.



But it's his work with Ennis that we keep going back to. Beyond *Preacher*, the duo collaborated to wonderful effect on *Hellblazer* and *The Punisher*. There's a moment in the latter that is so quintessentially Ennis/Dillon; in which mobsters pit Frank Castle against a polar bear. As the gangsters gleefully anticipate the carnage, Castle simply punches the beast out cold and carries on. Dillon always found the odd humour, the perfect reaction to something totally unexpected and outrageous.

Born in Luton, Dillon began working in comics at the age of 16, drawing for *Hulk Weekly*. He was working on *The Punisher* with Becky Cloonan at the time of his passing, and was an executive producer on the AMC TV adaptation of *Preacher*. In his touching tribute to Dillon posted on his Facebook page, Ennis wrote, "Steve was best man at my wedding and my good and dear friend. I think he probably taught me more about what that word means than anyone else." He will be missed.



GRUDGE MATCH

We talk to the stars of Sadako Vs Kayako

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

If you're anything like us, your reaction to discovering that *Sadako Vs Kayako* existed was "Where and when can I see this?" Thankfully, Shudder is hosting the fight between the demons from *The Ring* and *The Grudge*.

"I really wanted to play Sadako for a long time," enthuses star Elly Nanami. "I kept telling my manager I wanted to play a character that kills other people in horror movies! I really didn't want to miss this one, I was so happy when I was chosen I made a phone call to my parents!"

Nanami's Sadako is pitted against the croaking, contorting Kayako, and fellow franchise newcomer Rina Endo tells us that she tried to find a balance between honouring the old and finding something new. "It's very important to keep the other Kayako's movement," she explains. "But then I added my own movement using my joints and very cracking motions, and also the film director directed me to look at insects. I had a hard time, but I enjoyed it. It was a great honour."

Sadako, on the other hand, is a different challenge, but Nanami tells us that she had a great time finding ways to creep out audiences. "I really wanted to play something which scares everybody!" she remembers. "So I was thinking about ideas on how to scare other people, because I have no facial expressions, no lines, and I had to scare other people by standing there, by being there. It's really challenging, but it was exciting!"

Endo tells us that she's been thrilled with the response so far. "The film seems to be different from many people's expectations" she tells us. "Personally, I'm looking forward to seeing the next movie."



***The Grudge* vs *The Ring*: which is deadliest?**

Sadako Vs Kayako is coming soon to Shudder.

SciFiNow Vault

19-INCH DEATH TROOPER ACTION FIGURE

Website: www.jakks.com
RRP: £24.99

1 You know what they say: big action figure, bigger fun. Re-enact the *Rogue One* trailer with this smaller than life, but still pretty big, Death Trooper.

DELUXE FIGURINE SET

Website: www.disneystore.co.uk
RRP: £22.99

2 Get ready to role-play *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* with this set of what basically seems to be the entirety of the film's cast.

REBEL U WING FIGHTER BY LEGO

Website: www.lego.com
RRP: £69.99

3 Keep your mind (and your hands) occupied until *Rogue One* is released by building a Rebel U-Wing Fighter with this awesome Lego set.

3.75-INCH ACTION FIGURES

Website: www.hasbro.com
RRP: £7.50

With a whole selection of characters to choose from, these figures make great companions, whether you're feeling good or the pull of the Dark Side.



STAR WARS DESPATCH BAG: REY'S SALVAGE

Website: www.darkbunnytees.com
RRP: £30

4 This cool satchel, printed with Rey's Salvage yard's unofficial logo, is perfect for carrying everything you need for school, work and scavenging expeditions.

R2-D2 SLIPPERS

Website: www.hawkin.com
RRP: £12

5 These super-soft and comfortable droid slippers is the perfect gift for any *Star Wars* fanatic with feet, as long as those feet are size 8-10.

BLACK SERIES 6-INCH ACTION FIGURE

Website: www.hasbro.com **RRP:** £21.99

6 Every *Star Wars* fan needs a Jyn Erso action figure to both play with and carry around in their pocket as a tiny companion.

DAYS OF FUTURE NOW

Here are some upcoming UK conventions that you can't afford to miss...

Reading Comic-Con
26-27 November
Rivermead Leisure Complex, Caversham
skiddle.com/whats-on
Price: £6-£15
Reading locals are in for a treat with this celebration of all things geeky, including guests Nick Joseph and Phil Buckenham.

For The Love Of Sci-Fi
3-4 December
Bowlers Exhibition Centre, Manchester
fortheloveofsci-fi.com
Price: £12-£50
Satisfy even your most niche geek interests at this con that's designed to do just that, props, set builds, orchestras and all.

Starfury: 7th Annual Vampire Ball
2-4 December
Renaissance Hotel, Heathrow
seanharry.com
Price: £35-£165
Celebrate all things Joss Whedon in general, with guests including Eliza Dushku and Miracle Laurie.

Toymageddon
4 December
Scarborough Spa, Scarborough
scarboroughspa.co.uk/events
Price: £2.50
Get your toys and collectables shopping done at Toymageddon, formerly VTAC, just in time for Christmas.

Nerd Mart
17 December
The Oasis Academy, Lordshill
nerdageddon.co.uk
Price: £0.50-£1
Take another chance to get your nerd-themed Christmas shopping done early. You can never have enough stuff.

Star Wars Identities
18 November 2016 – 3 September 2017
The O2, London
starwarsidentities.com
Price: £15-£25
This *Star Wars* exhibition at the O2 arena is running for almost a year, so you have no excuse not to get down there.

The Graphic Art of Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them
4 November 2016 – 4 March 2017
Galerie Arludik, Paris
arludik.com
Price: £TBC
Hop on the ferry and drool over gorgeous *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts* art.



SciFiNow does YouTube

Subscribe to our YouTube channel for exclusive interviews and reviews!

Get brand new interviews, reviews and (a few of) the latest trailers with our very own shiny YouTube channel. Subscribe today and keep the boredom at bay anywhere there's Wi-Fi, 4G and a set of earphones!

For fun facts and shouty opinions, check out our '5 Things You Need To Know About' series, where we break down all the biggest blockbusters – both good and bad – from the last year, including *Deadpool*, *Batman V Superman*, *Captain America: Civil War* and more!

Elsewhere, get a look behind the scenes of some of the year's loudest and shiniest films. Stephen Amell talks about his role in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out Of The Shadows*, Felicity Smoak, Donatello and being Canadian. The cast of *Star Trek* Beyond, including Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Sofia Boutella, Karl Urban and John Cho, chat about their characters, the *Trek* legacy and their Hogwarts houses, all while in varying states of dress. Meanwhile, Vin Diesel, Michael Caine and Rose Leslie talk *The Last Witch Hunter.*

We also play host to some lovely indie horror previews, including the new trailer for Darren Lynn Bousman's grim mystery horror *Abattoir*, starring the likes of Jessica Lowndes, Joe Anderson, Lin Shaye and Dayton Callie, as well as the trailer for black and white indie horror *Darling*, directed by the brilliant Mickey Keating and starring Lauren Ashley Carter.

Subscribe today for more exclusive news, interviews and reviews to get excited about!

COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Send your cosplay to @SciFiNow or Facebook.com/SciFiNow



GHOST RIDER

COSPLAYER: ZARATHOS COSPLAY (BEN GOODWIN) **FROM:** MANCHESTER, UK **PHOTO:** NICHOLAS GRAY **FACEBOOK/TWITER:** /ZARATHOSCOSPLAY

1 THE CHARACTER

There is just something about Ghost Rider that captures my imagination – he is my 'spirit' character, if that makes sense. It was the look that initially drew me to him though; how can you not like a guy whose head is on fire? That also made building the costume more of a challenge, especially to try and stand out among all the other amazing cosplayers out there.

2 THE COSTUME

I wanted to make it as true to the comics as possible. My mask was custom-made by the incredibly talented HurleyFX – it really gives the costume its distinctive look and style. As for the clothing, I try to put as much detail in as possible, as I think that makes a big difference. I am not naturally creative though; everything is pretty much sourced from eBay then put together on my kitchen table!

3 THE DESIGN

There are lots of different styles of Ghost Rider outfits, but everyone recognises him in his black motorcycle leathers. I deliberately weathered the entire outfit to make the costume look 'lived in'. I took a few of my favourite pieces of different costumes and put them all into one design. Although it seems like a generic Ghost Rider outfit, it's a mishmash of lots of ideas, and I think it's worked out well.

4 THE ACCESSORIES

The main design choices for this costume are the flames and spikes. The flames make or break most Ghost Rider cosplays, they are impossible to really get right. I didn't want to try and recreate actual flames, so the design was deliberately stylised. The Spikes are obviously also a key part of the costume – I chose slightly exaggerated 'cartoony' ones to reflect the comic as much as possible.

HOT TOPICS

Your most-read posts on SciFiNow.co.uk



BLACK PANTHER ADDS ROGUE ONE STAR
tinyurl.com/hlobqss



SHUDDER UK HORROR STREAMING ARRIVES
tinyurl.com/hc6h4fk



MARY POPPINS RETURNS ADDS COLIN FIRTH
tinyurl.com/joak2hv



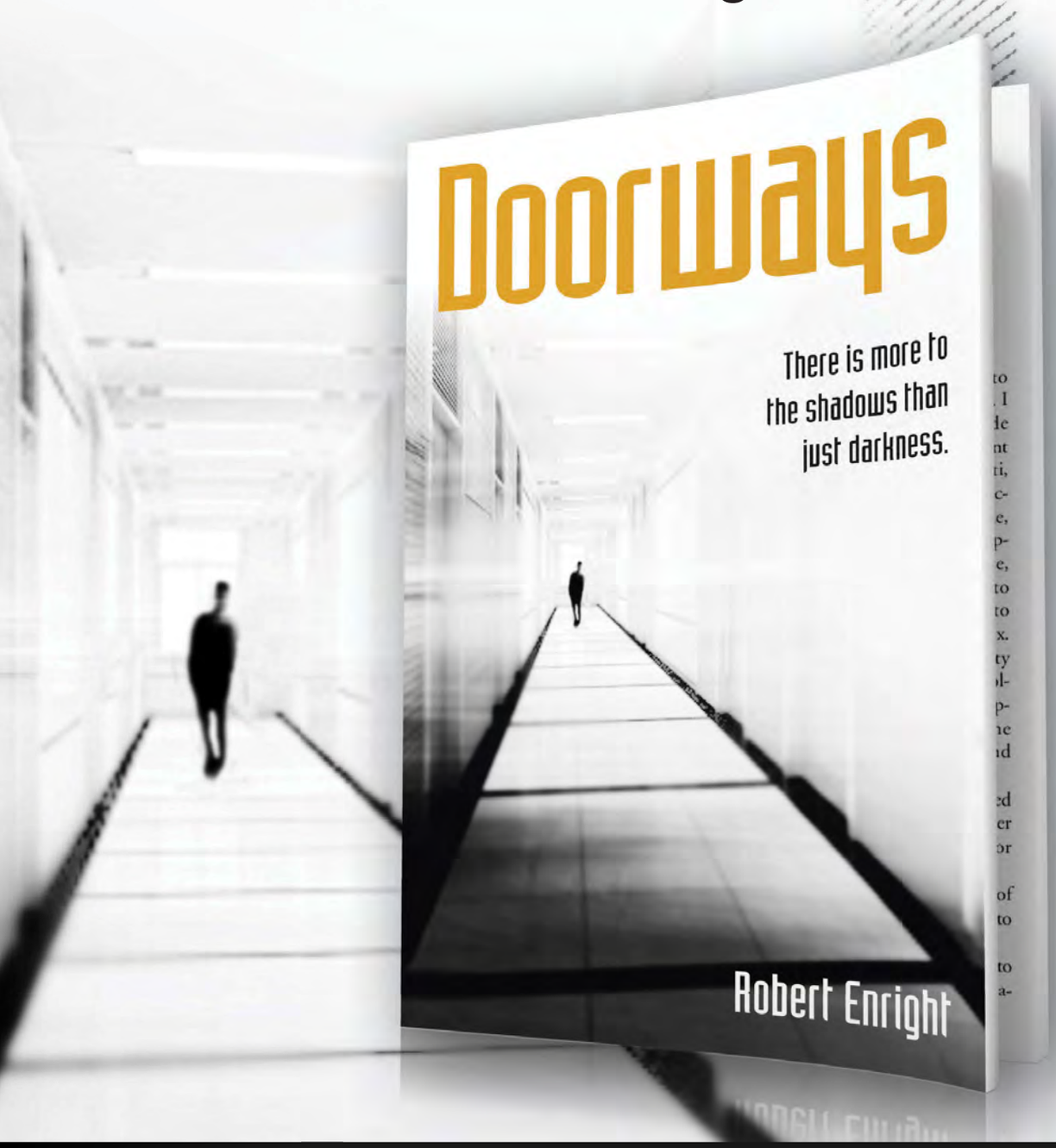
CLASS'S SOPHIE HOPKINS ON COAL HILL
tinyurl.com/h3oclyd



HAN SOLO MOVIE CASTS LANDO CALRISSIAN
tinyurl.com/j5ezlgu

TRIVIA NICOLAS CAGE, BORN NICOLAS COPPOLA, WAS INSPIRED BY LUKE CAGE FOR HIS STAGE NAME.

Doorways, the thrilling new read from Robert Enright, is now available from Amazon and all good bookshops.



SPECIAL OFFER - 50% off for SciFiNow readers
Go to urbanepublications.com & add Doorways to your cart. Input code 'door' to get your discount!



THE REBELLION STRIKES BACK

JOIN THE FIGHT TODAY!

TAKING ITS CUE FROM A NEW HOPE, **ROGUE ONE** MARKS THE **START OF A NEW ERA** IN **A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY**. GARETH EDWARDS & FELICITY JONES DELIVER US THE SECRET PLANS FOR DISNEY'S FIRST STAR WARS SPIN-OFF MOVIE...

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

The Rebellion Strikes Back



"IT IS A PERIOD OF CIVIL WAR. REBEL SPACESHIPS, STRIKING FROM A HIDDEN BASE, HAVE WON THEIR FIRST VICTORY AGAINST THE EVIL GALACTIC EMPIRE. DURING THE BATTLE, Rebel spies managed to steal secret plans to the Empire's ultimate weapon, the Death Star…"

Nothing speaks more for the capacity of the *Star Wars* universe to innovate, evoke and inspire than the fact that from just these few lines of dialogue, an entire movie has been born. It's *Star Wars*, but not as you've seen it before. *Rogue One* may bear the moniker 'A *Star Wars* Story', but in truth, it's something else altogether.

Looking back to when Disney purchased Lucasfilm in 2012, many saw this as a new era for the saga, one in which the CGI omnishambles of the prequel trilogy could be left behind in favour of something more human and more real. *The Force Awakens* began this process with its predominantly real-life filming locations, but *Rogue One* has upped the ante in this regard. The choice of director Gareth Edwards – renowned for up-close-and-personal sci-fi hits *Monsters* and *Godzilla* – is as much a statement of intention ⇨

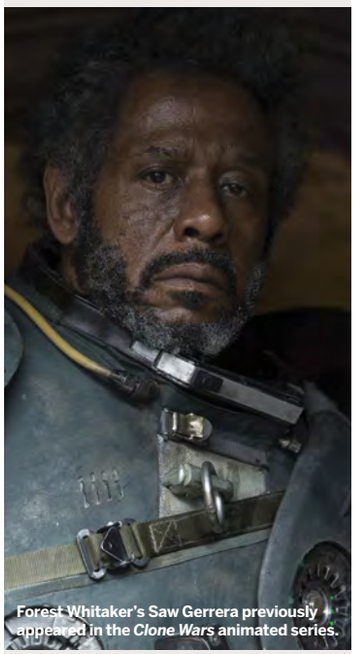


Director Orson Krennic (Ben Mendelsohn), flanked by his oh-so ominous Death Troopers.

regarding what kind of film this will be as it is a coup in hiring yet another of the genre's most talented filmmakers. For his part, Edwards is aiming high when it comes to his inspiration.

"It was case of trying to make it feel like *Star Wars* – but it's not *Star Wars*, so it's like a contradiction, and it felt like a look at the things that obviously influenced George Lucas the first time round [in *A New Hope*]. There's a lot of things from World War I and World War II, and a bit less from things like Vietnam and even more recently the Gulf War, so it felt like that was a visual area to maybe branch out into. So Vietnam movies were definitely an influence in that sense, and obviously one of the greatest ones is *Apocalypse Now*."

Which – funnily enough – Lucas almost ended up directing. "Yeah, right! It's mad to think what that would have been like! Then we might not have had *Star Wars*; he might have gone off on a different tangent, so it's probably a good thing he did it."



Forest Whitaker's Saw Gerrera previously appeared in the *Clone Wars* animated series.

INDEED, IT IS. IF LUCAS HAD GONE INTO THE JUNGLE, WE WOULDN'T HAVE ROGUE ONE, WHICH VERY APTLY PITCHES ITS LEAD CHARACTERS INTO THE HEART OF DARKNESS

that is the Galactic Civil War. Our heroes this time are a rag-tag assortment of Rebel Alliance members: rebel with a cause Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones), dashing pilot Cassian Andor (Diego Luna) and his irascible reprogrammed Imperial droid, K-2S0 (voiced and motion-captured by Alan Tudyk), former Imperial pilot Bodhi Rook (Riz Ahmed), blind swordsman Chirrut Îmwe (Donnie Yen) and his gruff partner Baze Malbus (Wen Jiang). As is de rigeur with anyone who has worked on *Star Wars*, Edwards is cagey with the finer details of the plot, although he does hint that when we come across it, the Rebel Alliance has seen better days.

"It's a time when the Rebellion is fractured and potentially looking to fall apart," says Edwards. "They know there's this superweapon out there, they discover that it exists and that there is no time to stop it. The central characters have to go on a journey to have even the slightest chance of being able to stop this thing."

That might sound typically clear-cut, but this isn't the case. Traditionally, *Star Wars*' heroes have been messiah figures: Anakin Skywalker was the Chosen One, Luke his incredibly powerful son, and it's safe to say that there's more to Rey than meets the eye, in spite of her insistence that she's "just a scavenger". As if to hammer home the point, the first *Rogue One* teaser began with a roll call of Jyn's various transgressions – she's no wet-behind-the-ears farmgirl or yippee-spewing child of prophecy.

"Jyn isn't someone who's looking to be a heroine," says actress Felicity Jones, who leads the cast off the back of outstanding performances in the Oscar-winning *The Theory Of Everything* and genre tear-jerker *A Monster Calls*. "She's had an experience of life, she's someone who very much finds herself having to really toughen up and embrace the situation that she's in, but it's definitely something she's thrown into; she's not out looking for it."

It's a view that Edwards very much concurs with: "I didn't want to have a central character where they were born to save the galaxy – that feels like what *A New Hope* did, so really it's someone who wasn't necessarily born to do anything, and something happened to them in their







life that put them on a different path. They weren't destined to be a saviour, and they weren't necessarily destined to have the life they ended up having.

"The idea was that she wasn't supposed to have this life. Because of what happens to her when she's young, the life she was destined to have is shattered, and she ends up like a soldier, so I wanted it to feel like this is a woman who's pre-destined to be like this, and that she's rose to the challenge, but inside there somewhere there's a little vulnerability. You can see the crack in the armour, and that she might not make it. I think it was more interesting to have someone that wasn't totally badass to the point where you never felt like they could lose – there's a side to it where you do worry about her, and you think that she might not make it out of the film."

"All of the Rebels in *Rogue One* are unlikely heroes," adds Jones. "They are brought together in the galaxy, but they've all had histories and they've all had their own struggles to overcome, so there's a real unity in them, and that's partly what brings them together: hope. There's a willingness for all of them; they're finding their purpose, and in some ways they've been quite disparate. There's been a loss, so they come together to unite on something that they really care about."

STAR WARS HAS ALWAYS BEEN A TRADITIONAL GOOD-VERSUS-EVIL IN THE MORE CLASSICAL STORYTELLING MOULD – THE FORCE AWAKENS MAY have blurred the lines a tiny bit with the introduction of Kylo Ren, but again *Rogue One* takes things even further. For instance, Forest Whitaker's character Saw Gerrera (who previously appeared in *The Clone Wars* as a guerrilla fighter being trained by Obi-Wan Kenobi, Anakin Skywalker and Ahsoka Tano) is a polarising figure, described by Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy in an interview with *Entertainment Weekly* as being "on the fringe of the Rebel Alliance." He's the kind of morally grey character we're not used to seeing in *Star Wars*, and according to Edwards he won't be alone in this regard.

"There's good people in our film that are doing bad things – because of their perspective they think it's the right thing to do – and bad people who get to do good things. It's not black and white; I think it's a bit more modern in its view of what's right and wrong, and at the heart of it is kind of a relationship – a family relationship to some extent, like you have with the Skywalker story, but that thing where you go: 'Okay, we're going to make a different *Star Wars* film'. It's not like you can take any genre or movie and go, 'Let's go and make that, but in space', and stick ⇨

DEATH STAR BY NUMBERS

Peeling back the layers of the greatest power in the galaxy

168 THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IT TAKES TO WORK THE PLANET-DESTROYING LASER

903KM THE LENGTH OF THE EQUATORIAL TRENCH OF THE DEATH STAR

21x THE NUMBER OF TIMES THE ACTUAL MOON IS BIGGER THAN THE DEATH STAR

€852,000,000,000,000,000 THE AMOUNT IT WOULD COST TO BUILD IT IN THE REAL WORLD

NAMES ON A PETITION FOR THE US GOVERNMENT TO BUILD A REAL DEATH STAR **30,000**

1,161,293 THE NUMBER OF CREW MEMBERS ON BOARD THE DEATH STAR AT ONE TIME

134 QUADRILLION TONS OF STEEL USED TO BUILD THE DEATH STAR

800,000 YEARS THE TIME IT WOULD TAKE TO BUILD IT IN REAL LIFE



Gareth Edwards directs leads Felicity Jones and Diego Luna.

> "IT'S AN EPIC CANVAS IN THE BACKDROP OF A WAR, AND A HERO'S JOURNEY"
> GARETH EDWARDS



In among the old favourites, *Rogue One* has made room for some eye-catching new creations.

the words '*Star Wars*' on it, and then it'll be a different *Star Wars* movie. It doesn't work, it doesn't feel like *Star Wars*, and you start to analyse what makes a *Star Wars* movie."

THE QUESTION OF WHAT MAKES A STAR WARS MOVIE IS AN INTERESTING ONE. IN THE PAST, THE ANSWER WAS WHATEVER GEORGE LUCAS WANTED

it to be, but now that other filmmakers are shepherding it along, the answer has the capacity to be something different entirely. While the sensibilities that Edwards is bringing along are immediately obvious to anyone who has watched *Monsters* or *Godzilla*, his opinions of what makes a *Star Wars* film have clearly been the result of a lot of considered thought.

"Everyone's got a different opinion, but there are a few things that they have in common. For me, it is like there's a family connection somewhere, and it's about good becoming bad and bad becoming good, and it's an ensemble – it's an epic canvas in the backdrop of a war, and at the heart of it is a more emotional journey that is a hero's journey, to some extent. What we try to do a little bit – I don't know how successful we were – you've got these archetypes of classic stories, and George Lucas took them and would break them in half and reinvent them, so a mentor would become like a goblin, and he took a hero, cut it in half and made Han Solo and Luke Skywalker.

"So we, not on purpose, labelled and described all the things that make a character in *Star Wars*, and took some of those labels and stuck them over with another character and swapped them around a bit and mixed and matched. An example in our film would be C-3P0 and Chewbacca merging makes K-2S0 – he's a droid, but he doesn't really give a shit about anything other than his friend [Cassian], so that feels right because it's *Star Wars*, but it feels correct but different, and we tried to do that with lots of different aspects of the film."

Even so, it's a standalone movie. Unlike every other new *Star Wars* era, Edwards doesn't possess the luxury of having three movies with which to set up, tell and conclude his story. He only has a third of that time, so *Rogue One* needs to hit the ground running. Inevitably, this means that sacrifices had to be made.

"We probably at the start had enough material and ideas for a ten-hour film. It's heartbreaking, slowly pulling each one out like a game of *Jenga*, trying not to let it collapse. I'm sure it's why George feels the way he does about wanting to do the special editions in that there's all these things he wanted that he couldn't quite do the first time, but you end up thinking, 'Oh, there was this and that'. At the end of the day the story is the most important thing."

And Jyn is at the forefront, her relationships with the other characters forming the backbone of the story: with her on-screen father Galen Erso, played by Mads Mikkelsen (who's heavily involved with the Death Star project, although Jones and Edwards steer clear of further details); and her shared history with Ben Mendelsohn's big bad Director Krennic (alternately described as "pretty frightening" and "lovely to work with"). From what we've seen of the footage so far though, the bulk of her scenes are with Diego Luna's Cassian Andor – an actor that she admired for his role in Alfonso Cuarón's acclaimed coming-of-ager *Y Tu Mamá También*, which Jones





Edwards wanted to create a film with a more intimate feel among such classic backdrops as Yavin IV.



Jones loved working with Luna, having been a fan since watching *Y Tu Mama Tambien*.







admits to having been a big fan of while growing up.

"I thought it was the coolest film ever – why did we not make films like that in England? [Cassian] and Jyn, in the story, have a lovely dynamic, and [Luna] is very open, very collaborative and easy going, and loves drinking espressos. He was great fun."

ALSO ALONG FOR THE RIDE IS THE AFOREMENTIONED K-2SO. AN IMPERIAL SECURITY DROID REPROGRAMMED BY CASSIAN TO ASSIST THE REBELLION, played by Alan Tudyk (best known for *Firefly*, but his previous mo-cap work in *I, Robot* gets sadly overlooked) – which made for quite an arresting sight on set.

"It was sometimes quite distracting," remembers Jones, "Because he would wear this extraordinary pyjama suit with ski boots and these half a metre long platforms – which was to help us – everything was to make it so you didn't feel like the green screen to make it feel as believable as possible. There were often times where we had to stop ourselves from laughing too much, because he had this very strange grey suit on that had all these weird triangles, which is what helps him become K-2. But he's fantastic – he comes from a comedy background, so he would always be throwing in lines that would just make everyone on the set hunched shoulders, laughing away. He really kept the atmosphere very light."

By the sound of things, this kind of camaraderie will be very important. This is a down-and-dirty war film, the spirit of which *Star Wars* has never quite been able to capture. The footage we've seen so far encapsulates this: ground-level views of incoming AT-AT walkers, explosions going off left, right and centre, bodies of Stormtroopers floating on sandy shores, and street brawls with Imperial personnel. For Edwards, the goal was to make this a real war movie, and he went all out in his attempt to achieve this.

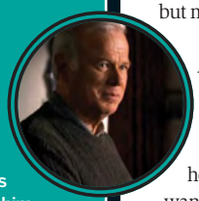
"The goal was to try to make it feel like we were embedded with them, so whatever the action was, typically in a film you do one shot at a time. You say, 'Okay, we're doing this shot next', and everyone rehearses it. When everyone's very confident you then shoot it.

"We wouldn't finesse it too much so that people would accidentally fall on each other and do things and it would go a bit wrong," he continues, "and then we would basically dive in with the camera in different places. We had real – not gunshots, but pellets that they fire, they would hit armour and create sparks, so you could get hit. They weren't supposed to hit actors, but on some occasions the actors had very strangely perfect bruising that were exactly the same size as these airgun pellets, and the airgun people would be like, 'I promise you we didn't hit them.' I'd be like, 'Wasn't it weird, they appeared during the scene!'

"We had a war photographer there who was in the Middle East – we wanted him

BAD DADS

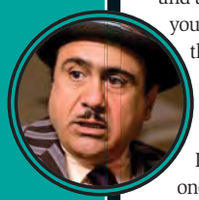
Star Wars is rife with terrible fathers. Here are other sci-fi stalwarts in urgent need of parenting classes...



ANTHONY COOPER
LOST (2004-10)
He stole his son's kidney, destroyed his relationship and left him paralysed. He's a nasty piece of work, he deserves everything that comes to him.



WAYNE SZALINSKI
HONEY I SHRUNK THE KIDS (1989)
Not only does his equipment shrink his kids and force them traumatic adventures – he nearly eats one of them.



HARRY WORMWOOD
MATILDA (1996)
A profound dickhead right from the birth of his daughter, he treated her terribly and gave her away without a moment's thought.



DR EVIL
AUSTIN POWERS (1999-2002)
Means well, but deals with rejection in the worst possible way – by immediately making a clone one eighth his size as a surrogate son.



TYWIN LANNISTER
GAME OF THRONES (2011-14)
Pretends to care about his family while controlling every aspect of their lives, and his treatment of Tyrion is ultimately his undoing.

⋙ to cover the behind-the-scenes stuff so it would have that flavour about it. I'd turn to him sometimes and be like, 'Does this film give you flashbacks?' Sometimes, with a very straight face, he'd say, 'Yeah', and he wouldn't want to go there. I didn't know how to feel about that:, 'Okay, I'm glad we're getting it right, but maybe not!'"

"The whole methodology with *Rogue One* was to keep it very naturalistic; very immediate," confirms Jones. "[Gareth] often holds the camera himself, because he knows exactly what he wants: he wants to be there with you, with the character. From the very beginning he was very passionate about Jyn – we didn't want her to be objectified; we just wanted you to completely relate to her as a person. I remember we were doing a scene in one of the ships, and he would often say, "Okay guys, just improvise, try things out,' and then someone would tell a joke, and you would get genuine laughter. So there's so much passion that has gone into making the film.

"I was watching early footage before we had started shooting, and I was fortunate to be able to sit in on one of the screenings, and I remember Gareth saying that the Stormtroopers were too clean – 'Let's put a bit more mud on them so we feel the authenticity of the experience,' and that went into every detail in terms of just making you feel as the audience that you're going to be totally immersed in the experience."

It's important to not lose sight of what fans will be looking for: references that tie it into the films that came before it. Obviously, the Death Star plays a crucial role in the story, and characters like Bail Organa (Jimmy Smits) and Mon Mothma (Genevieve O'Reilly, whose scenes were deleted from *Revenge Of The Sith*) will be involved.



In keeping with the ethos of the new *Star Wars* movies, much of the shoot took place in real locations.



> "WE EXIST, TIMEFRAME-WISE, WITHIN DAYS OF A NEW HOPE"
> GARETH EDWARDS

We're sure there'll be surprises – indeed, the recent Tony Gilroy-directed reshoots are heavily rumoured to include the addition of some cameos – and Edwards is aware of the benefits of acknowledging the wider universe.

"On day one, the first thing that you do is a list of anything you could ever have in the film that's possible, and then one by one you start to realise, 'Well, that can't really happen because of this reason, and if that happened that would just make the galaxy too small.' Then suddenly you come up with new things, and at the same time you get more confident in your new characters, and they start to take over the story more and more.

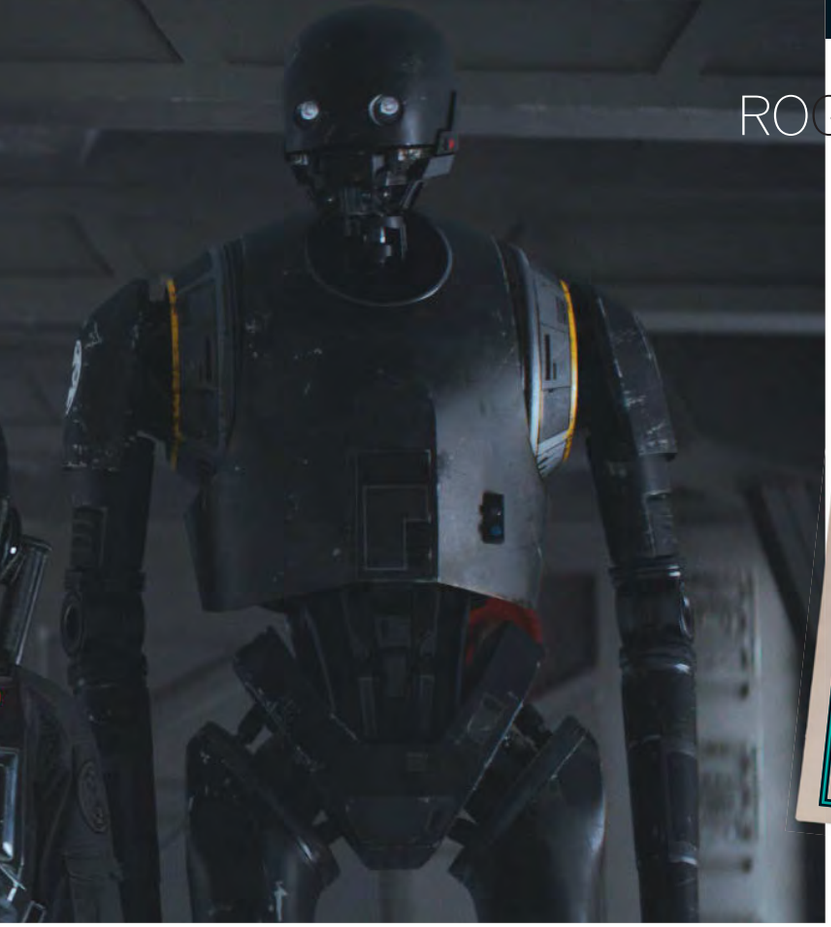
"We exist, timeframe wise, within days of *A New Hope*, but we're in mainly different locations. It's funny, there's a lot of Easter eggs for people, and the very first day that's what I got excited about: 'We can have this character, we can have that character', and then you start to realise, other people at Lucasfilm have already been there a few years and got over that humbling period... it's really about the new things you can do, and so yeah, there are things – I don't want to ruin them, but the goal was that you could remove all of them and the film would still work. Anything that's in there has earned its place – it's not just like a nod and a wink to the fans."

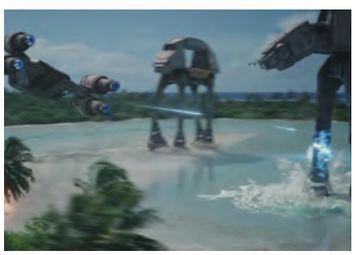


BEYOND ALL OF THAT, THE THING EVERYONE'S LOOKING FORWARD TO MOST IS SOMEONE THAT WE ALL RECOGNISE: DARTH VADER.

Presumably there to keep the Death Star construction process on schedule, we're sure he won't just looming over Director Krennic's neck; he'll be getting his robotic hands dirty.

"There are different aspects to Darth Vader," recalls Edwards, "and it was a learning process, because you think, 'You just put on the outfit and that's Darth Vader.' Then you realise, you can really easily not get it right. Firstly, the person playing him has to have the right body language. You can put the right-height actor in, and you go, 'It's just not Darth Vader, it's wrong.' You can't really teach it, so it was a long hunt for someone who felt like they had the right presence. And there's the helmet. The one in *A New Hope*, when you watch that on the cinema







The film centres around attempts to steal the plans for the Death Star.

screen, it's not great – you can see the scratches and handprints – so we tried to put all that back in and have all the little imperfections, and make it feel like the *New Hope* Vader.

"Then – something I never thought about until I started watching the scenes again – he is always the highest eyeline in the shot, so even when he's further away, which normally make someone smaller, you have to raise the camera up so he's taller again. So you have strange things that only happen with Vader when you watch *Empire Strikes Back* again. When it's an over-the-shoulder shot, the camera will be up here, and it's really odd, but it's to keep Vader the highest person, and you have to do that – it's like a rule."

All of this serves to highlight how much of a larger-than-life presence Vader is, as was hammered home by the early screen tests undertaken by Edwards for *Rogue One*. "The very first time we had Vader on set in any form whatsoever was actually a super-fan. We hadn't designed the suit yet, and we were just doing the first ever camera test to choose what kind of camera we were going to shoot the film on, and there was a fan who had made the world's most realistic Vader outfit – he had the voicebox that emulated the sound effects, and when he spoke it came out like James Earl Jones.

"We were walking through – it was the set from *The Force Awakens*, we just borrowed it – and I got lost. I'm walking through the corridors going, 'Where is everyone?' And as I was going through, I could hear this voice at the end of the corridor going [mimics breathing noise], and I genuinely feel like I went from a 40-year old and slowly became like a four-year old as I walked up to him, because it was just like, 'Oh my God, it's Darth Vader.' You don't want to say anything to him, give him directions or talk to him. You're really embarrassed, and you look at the rest of the crew, and they're all stood there like four-year olds going, 'Talk to him! Tell him to do something!' And it's like, 'I don't know what to tell him! It's Darth Vader, he doesn't take orders!'"

Beyond all of this, there's the fact that they are making cinematic history. Regardless of how the film turns out, it will be remembered not only as the first *Star Wars* standalone movie, but for mere virtue of *being* a *Star Wars* movie. The names of Gareth Edwards, Felicity Jones etc are in the canon now – and while they'll undoubtedly be involved with plenty more great movies in the future, it's safe to say that they'll never have an experience like this again.

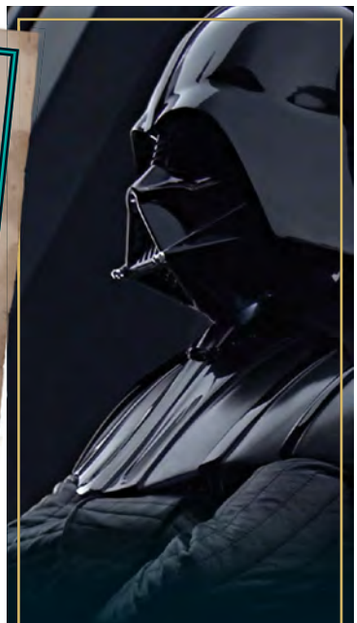
"When you see Stormtroopers coming at you with blasters, you remember that you're in *Star Wars*!" laughs Jones. "It was a unique experience… you'll be with Riz [Ahmed] or Diego, and you'll be discussing a scene, very seriously, talking about how we're going to do this, and then suddenly you'll look up, and there's a giant monkey hanging out of an airship, so it's quite extraordinary. I used to walk onto these enormous sets with 150 people, and there are Stormtroopers walking around without helmets on… it is a magical experience, and one that you're constantly storing those moments and remembering them, because I think when I'm a little old lady, I'll look back at those very fondly."

"I remember when we were designing helmets for the film, like Stormtrooper and Death Trooper helmets and stuff," recalls Edwards. "It was the first day on the film with the assistant director, who's usually my closest friend during the shoot, and we're doing all this stuff, everyone's being very professional, and he just went, 'I'm so sorry, I have to say, this is the best fucking meeting I've ever had it in my life, I can't believe we're talking about Stormtrooper helmets!'

"There are so many things that happen when you make a *Star Wars* film that are like such a privilege, and I know I'm never going to get to do it again. You don't just get one of them; you get like 50 of them, and I just want to share it, because it feels unfair that one person gets to go through all this stuff, and I guess maybe the film coming out is sharing it."

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story will be released in cinemas on 16 December.





MEETING DARTH VADER

The director discusses his first encounter with James Earl Jones

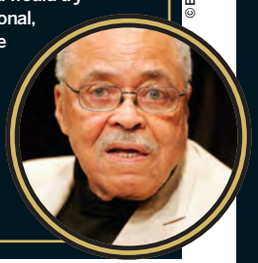
Darth Vader may be an imposing presence, but it's his voice that lends him his gravitas, which made it such a coup that James Earl Jones was willing to return to the role.

As Edwards tells it, meeting him in person was quite an experience. "We went over to New York. It was at Christmas, and *The Force Awakens* was out. It was everywhere, so even crossing the road to you passed a shop that's got Darth Vader in it, and kids have got Vader on their t-shirts.

"We went to this sound-recording place, and begin the session, and I was like, 'You see Darth Vader everywhere, right? Every time you see him do you think, 'That's me?'' And he went, 'No, not at all, I just see George.' It's that thing I did years ago – that little bit of voice work.' He hasn't watched *The Empire Strikes Back* or *Return Of The Jedi* since he did the recording session I'm sure."

For all his professionalism, ultimately when faced with the full power of James Earl Jones, he became as much of a fanboy as everyone else.

"Whenever he said a line – 'Power' was the one – you would try and stay professional, but he would have his back to us, because he was facing the screen, and we would look at each other and be tearing up!"



© Eva Rinaldi



ROGUE WARRIORS

DONNIE YEN AND WEN JIANG ON FIGHTING FOR THE REBEL ALLIANCE IN ROGUE ONE...

AS JYN PUTS TOGETHER HER TEAM, SHE IS JOINED ON THE MOON OF JEDHA BY CHIRRUT ÎMWE, A BLIND MONK WHO WIELDS IMPRESSIVE MARTIAL ARTS SKILLS, AND BAZE MALBUS, A WEAPONS EXPERT FILLED WITH REMORSE. The Chinese acting titans, Donnie Yen and Jiang Wen, spoke to us about joining the *Star Wars* universe...

WORDS **LAUREN WILLIAMS**

JIANG WEN IS BAZE MALBUS



Were you surprised to be offered a role in a *Star Wars* film?
Yes. I didn't expect this offer. I had never seen a *Star Wars* film before. The first time I talked to Gareth Edwards I said that I wasn't really interested. But Gareth sent me an email telling me how wonderful the character would be, and then I asked a friend of mine in America whether I should consider this offer. The friend said it was a fantastic opportunity. No Chinese actor has ever been in a *Star Wars* movie, and a lot of people in my country would look up to me if I joined the *Star Wars* team.

Could you understand the script?
The English script I could not really understand, so I passed it to my son, who is a fan. My son said, "What has *Star Wars* got to do with you?" [laughs] My son read the script in half a day and he left me a note: "Dad, we need to talk!" When we spoke he said I had to join up!

Did your son say why?
He said that Baze is a great hero, and also a fun hero. He has a lot of humour. That was good, because I was worried that the character might not be important in the film.

My son and daughter said that my movies back home weren't very interesting for kids, so I should do this one! I asked my kids whether I needed to watch the first six episodes before doing this one, but they said not really.

How did you find playing him – was the humour difficult to play?
Not so much. I feel like he is a character in a cowboy movie. But I can't say too much about him really. I often play bad characters in Western-type movies. It's good to be something different this time around. There is a lot of interaction with Donnie's character in the movie; we are beyond brothers. Wherever one goes, so does the other. Maybe people will misunderstand how close we are. [laughs]

Did you work on Baze with Gareth?
It's not my business to talk to the director about this! [laughs] No, it's normal practice that I propose my ideas to the director. We communicated through Skype, though that was just background and back story. Not that much has made it into the shooting script. And when it came to shooting we just followed the script.

How does the *Star Wars* experience differ from Chinese movies?
In some ways it is similar to what I'd do in China. I've done some very big movies in China. But also it's hard to compare because in some ways we are quite far behind — we have a lot to do to catch up with Western cinema. Also, it is interesting: I went to Shakespeare's home in England, and thought that really English-speaking people express things in drama, whereas in China we express a lot through poetry. I find the stories from Shakespeare, and *The Bible*, very inspiring.


Like his friend, Baze Malbus fights the Empire from the moon of Jedha.

> "CHIRRUT AND BAZE GO EVERYWHERE TOGETHER. THEY'RE LIKE BROTHERS"
> DONNIE YEN

DONNIE YEN IS CHIRRUT IMWE



How did you get involved with the film?
The studio called me a couple of months before we started shooting. I was thrilled to be invited onto *Star Wars*, but I already had plans for another movie. I needed a solid reason to be a part of it, and I didn't want to be away from my kids for too long. We went back and forth a lot, and it was my kids who persuaded me to sign up. They wanted to see Stormtroopers! They said, "You've got to do this movie!" They came to set and had some fun. And now they can say, "My father beats up Stormtroopers!"

What can you say about Chirrut?
He is very cool because of the martial arts aspect. Originally, the character was not blind, but it was my suggestion to the director that if he is blind he can use the Force when he fights. Chinese martial arts movies often stress using your inner strength to fight, so this correlates to some degree. I spoke a lot with Gareth [Edwards] when I was in Hong Kong about the look and personality of the character.

How does he interact with the other characters in the rebel team?
They argue and fight sometimes. [Chirrut and Baze] go everywhere together. They're like brothers.

How have you found the experience of playing a blind warrior?
This is my first time acting as a blind person. It felt quite awkward at the beginning being a blind fighter. With the lenses I can see a little bit, because I need to act, but not too much. He listens, he feels with his heart. And there is a tailor-made weapon that I use – a wooden stick! I don't use a gun too much.

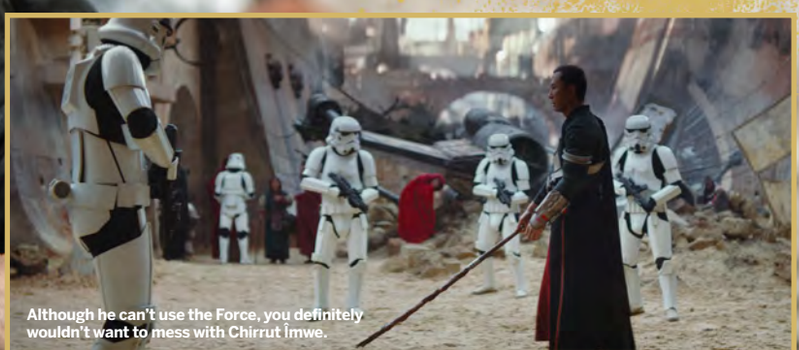
Is there also a bow that you use?
Yes, though it's not really a bow, per se. It is shaped like a bow, but it is actually a gun. In post they'll use CGI to add some kind of laser. I'm not sure how that will look just yet.

Did you develop any fighting techniques for this character that you've not used previously?
I wouldn't say the action choreography was too much of my remit. Being a blind character, everything kind of evolved from that. I wasn't looking for an innovative or inventive fight sequence. At the same time, I knew it was going to be a family movie, so I didn't focus too much on brutal action. I wanted to bring my kids to the cinema so that they could see me in a *Star Wars* movie.

Did you do any research into playing a blind warrior?
I observed blind people, how they behave, act, walk. Sometimes I cover my eyes and feel how it is to move and live as a blind person.

In Japanese cinema there is Zatoichi, the blind swordsman...
Yes, and that was part of my inspiration. I mentioned him to Gareth, and we spoke about they way he fights.

It's a nice connection, because Japanese cinema, especially Kurosawa, inspired George Lucas...
From what I understand, the whole world of *Star Wars* is a blend of Eastern and Western inspirations, films, philosophy and religion. I feel very familiar, being Chinese, with much of the thinking behind the original *Star Wars*.


Although he can't use the Force, you definitely wouldn't want to mess with Chirrut Imwe.



WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

BIG DAMN REBELS

EVERY SPACESHIP NEEDS A KICK-ASS, RAG-TAG REBEL CREW TO COVER ALL THE BASES. HERE ARE THE GALAXY'S FINEST...

THE MUSCLE

STARBUCK (BATTLESTAR GALACTICA)

With Ravagers, Reavers and Cylons knocking about, the ship is going to need some protection. That's where the unbreakable Kara Thrace, aka Starbuck, comes in. She doesn't give a damn who you are or where you come from – if she wants to punch someone, it might as well be you. If you mess with her crew, she'll frak you up.

THE SECOND IN COMMAND

WILLIAM RIKER (STAR TREK: TNG)

Riker's position of authority doesn't stop him from repeatedly ending up as the damsel in distress. It gives the rest of the crew something to do, at least. His unfailing loyalty to his captain and ship ensures that he will be around to be rescued for a long time.

THE CAPTAIN

STAR-LORD (GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY)

A natural-born leader, Peter Jason Quill has been exploring the galaxy for years. He doesn't often have more than 12 per cent of a plan, but he's a damn fine improviser. He's always ready to take flight at a moment's notice, albeit on one condition: he's bringing the tunes.

THE WILD CARD

RIVER TAM (FIREFLY)

A rag-tag crew wouldn't be a rag-tag crew without at least one member who might fly off the rails. River doesn't often show her hand, but when she does she exceeds expectations. This is one crewmember you definitely don't want to cross.



THE PILOT

POE DAMERON (STAR WARS)

Why employ a moderately talented pilot to fly your ship when you could have the best pilot in the Resistance? Poe Dameron really is the full package; he's brave and charismatic, he'll always believe in you, and he'll be the first to offer his jacket when it gets cold.

THE ALIEN

PA'U ZOTOH ZHAAN (FARSCAPE)

With diplomacy as her weapon of choice and spirituality on her side, Pa'u Zotoh Zhaan is always there to empathise and provide an alien's point of view when things in outer space get tough emotionally. She's also telepathic and amazing with deadly chemicals, so that's an added bonus.

THE TECH GUY

MONTGOMERY 'SCOTTY' SCOTT (STAR TREK)

All crews have a tech guy who knows everything there is to know about all kinds of technology and engineering, and a guy that doesn't take life too seriously. This crew's tech guy is Montgomery 'Scotty' Scott, who also comes with a quirky accent. Two birds with one stone.

THE DROID

THE ROBOT (LOST IN SPACE)

Though technically not a droid, the Robot is there to carry out the tasks that humans can't. It's the get-out clause of the group. In keeping with popular sci-fi tropes, the Robot may even end up exhibiting more humanity than some of the human members of the crew. Who'd have thought it?

© David Cousens

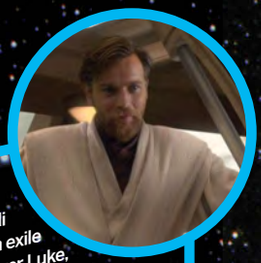
A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...

CHARTING THE TIMELINE OF DISNEY'S STAR WARS CANON AND PLOTTING ITS POTENTIAL SPINOFFS...

BBY- BEFORE THE BATTLE OF YAVIN

ABY- AFTER THE BATTLE OF YAVIN

WORDS STEVE WRIGHT



OBI-WAN KENOBI

PITCH: The veteran Jedi Master bides his time in exile on Tatooine, watching over Luke, having run-ins with Tusken Raiders and butting heads with Uncle Owen.

WHY IT WOULD WORK: There's a big gap between *ROTS* and *ANH* – plenty of time to explore what he's been up to and numerous potential topics. Plus, Ewan McGregor has been vocal about his approval of it.

WHY IT WOULDN'T: Some of the recently released comics have already touched upon what Kenobi has been up to. It doesn't cover the entire gap, but you'd have thought Disney would have kept this area out of bounds if they intended to get a movie on it. Plus, how much drama can you gleam out of a crazy old wizard sitting around in the desert?

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 4/5



32 BBY

EPISODE I: THE PHANTOM MENACE



22-19 BBY

THE CLONE WARS (TV SERIES)



18 BBY

AHSOKA (BOOK)



14 BBY

TARKIN (BOOK)



REBELS (TV SERIES)

22 BBY - 0 BBY

19 BBY - 3 ABY



11 BBY

A NEW DAWN (BOOK)



HEIR TO THE JEDI (BOOK)



18-14 BBY

LORDS OF THE SITH (BOOK)



11-5 BBY

LOST STARS (BOOK)

EPISODE II: ATTACK OF THE CLONES

22 BBY



DARK DISCIPLE (BOOK)



THE CLONE WARS



EPISODE III: REVENGE OF THE SITH

19 BBY

PRE 32 BBY



ROGUE ONE

0 BBY

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

A Galaxy Far, Far Away...



EPISODE IV: A NEW HOPE



0 BBY

BOBA FETT

PITCH: Discover how he took up the mantle of his father as the most feared bounty hunter in the galaxy

WHY IT WOULD WORK: If anyone needs a solo movie, it's Boba Fett. Rumoured to be the subject of the solo movie formerly helmed by Josh Trank, we've seen his early days thanks to the *Clone Wars* animated series, but he's still a relative rookie at this point. He didn't just become someone ballsy enough to stand up to Darth Vader overnight.

WHY IT WOULDN'T: Technically, he's canonically dead as of *Return Of The Jedi*. Why would Disney waste time fleshing out a dead character? Admittedly they're doing so with Han Solo, but he's basically *Star Wars*' best character. The legendary smuggler is iconic enough for his own movie, but hand on heart, is Fett?

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 3/5



EPISODE VII: THE FORCE AWAKENS



0-3 ABY



STAR WARS (COMICS)

BATTLEFRONT: TWILIGHT COMPANY (BOOK)



3-4 BBY

4 ABY



AFTERMATH (BOOK)



AFTERMATH: LIFE DEBT (BOOK)

28 ABY - 34 ABY



EPISODE VI: RETURN OF THE JEDI

5 ABY



AFTERMATH: EMPIRE'S END (BOOK)

4 ABY

0-3 ABY



DARTH VADER (COMICS)

EPISODE V: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK



3 ABY

28 ABY



BLOODLINE (BOOK)

TO BE CONFIRMED



ROGUE ONE: CATALYST (BOOK)



THRAWN (BOOK)



HAN SOLO

PALPATINE

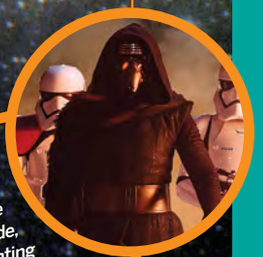
PITCH: The story of Sheev Palpatine, from his early Sith training as Darth Sidious to the shady double-dealing of his career in politics.

WHY IT WOULD WORK: With James Luceno's *Darth Plagueis* novel now non-canon, there's room for a new origin story. And honestly, we have so many questions to ask: where did he come from? How did the Sith get to him before the Jedi? How did he devise his masterplan? And who the hell actually was Plagueis?

WHY IT WOULDN'T: It boils down to the whole argument about the less we know about certain characters, the better. Plus, it would be another one of those prequel films in which everything ended before the story really got good. Do you honestly want that?

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 2/5





KYLO REN

PITCH: Discover how Ben Solo was seduced by Supreme Leader Snoke and the Dark Side, becoming Kylo Ren and preventing the Jedi from rising again.

WHY IT WOULD WORK: It gives the saga a second chance to get the story right that it so mishandled with the fall of Anakin Skywalker. Plus, it'd be interesting to see traditional heroes Han, Leia and Luke through a different lens. He rejected all of them – there has to be a reason for Snoke's overtures being so attractive to him.

WHY IT WOULDN'T: Again, it's territory that will probably be explored in Episodes VIII-IX. Plus, *Star Wars* has always liked to keep its villains as mysterious as possible until near the final act. We would argue that we already know too much about Kylo Ren as it is – don't ruin him by removing his aura of mystery.

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 2/5

© NASA



WHAT IS & WHAT SHOULD NEVER BE



WE TALK TO **SUPERNATURAL** STARS **JENSEN ACKLES**, **MARK SHEPPARD** AND **SAMANTHA SMITH** AND NEW **SHOWRUNNER ANDREW DABB** ABOUT WHAT'S COMING UP FOR THE THREE REMAINING WINCHESTERS IN SEASON 12...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER** INTERVIEWS **ADAM TANSWELL**

WITH EVERY NEW SEASON OF SUPERNATURAL COMES NEW PEOPLE TO SAVE AND NEW THINGS TO HUNT. BUT THE SERIES IS KICKING IT UP A NOTCH THIS YEAR FOR Season 12, which is bringing in a new showrunner too. Andrew Dabb, who has worked as a producer/writer for the last nine seasons, is taking the reins from Jeremy Carver, and he and the rest of the cast and crew seem to be making it their mission to breathe new life into the show.

The phrase 'breathe new life' can be taken quite literally in this case; after Sam and Dean's mother's brutal, fiery death in the pilot's very first scene, Mary Winchester has been long gone. She has turned up as an illusion (Season Five's 'Dark Side Of The Moon'), in djinn-induced dreams (Season Two's 'What Is And What Should Never Be') and by means of angel time travel (Season Four's 'In The Beginning') – that's just what dead characters do in *Supernatural* – but she's still been very much not-alive. That's why the Season 11 finale shocked *Supernatural* fans – and Dean himself – when Mary turned up in the final scene, apparently alive and well.

Even Samantha Smith, who has been playing adult-Mary on and off since the very first episode 12 years ago, had no idea that the Winchesters' mother was going to turn up again, living and breathing. "People would often ask me, 'How do you see Mary coming back?' And I think they pretty much run through the list of options, but nothing came of it," Smith says. "The only thing I could see was in the series finale. I thought, 'Maybe John and Mary came back to life, and because it's *Supernatural* they don't know who the boys are, and the boys are just going to have to be happy enough that they are alive.' So when they called me in the spring and asked if I wanted to be in the finale I was like, 'Oh, I guess the show's over.'"

"It's important for us to keep the stakes, keep with the danger and keep with the excitement – but in a more contained way and more of a family focused way," says Dabb. "In the last two years we've built up their family in a lot of interesting ways. Yes, there's Crowley and Castiel, but there's also Sheriff Jody Mills [Kim Rhodes] as she's evolved into a character for us. And now Mom is back – that's a whole other wrinkle. This season is really about putting the focus on family and building off that.

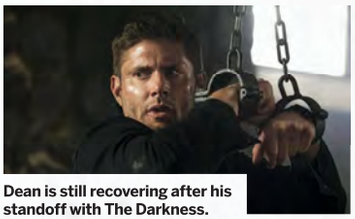
"Season 12 is a bit of a soft reset. The really important thing for us is making the conflicts and the stakes personal to Sam and Dean, because as you go big – and certainly last year we went real big – sometimes the idea of saving the world looks great on paper, but it can be a little nebulous in the telling of the story. For this season, the lens is on Sam and Dean and their relationship."

"This is what I'm excited about – we're 'control-alt-deleting' and getting back to the basics of what *Supernatural* is," adds Dean actor Jensen Ackles. "Eventually, Dean and Sam get back together, back to them taking cases, driving down the road, listening to rock music and hunting things that go bump in the night."

SUPERNATURAL HAS ALWAYS BEEN A FAMILY ORIENTATED SHOW; SAM AND DEAN'S SIBLING RELATIONSHIP IS WHAT HAD KEPT MANY VIEWERS HANGING on all these years. But the family theme ought to kick it up a notch now that the Winchesters have gained a matriarch.

"I think it's a very powerful theme and a very positive theme," says Mark Sheppard, who plays Crowley, the King of Hell. Crowley has been dealing with a matriarch of his own for the last couple of seasons since his alter ego Fergus's mother, the witch Rowena, came back into the picture in Season Ten.

"The notion of a big bad is an interesting concept, but we have more stories within us than necessarily a big story outside us," Sheppard continues. "We go back to some of the best episodes we ever had; pretty much every favourite episode is a standalone episode. If you take 11 to 12 seasons together, you have some seasons that involve a major story arc, and some that involve less major story arcs and more theme. You have some seasons that are bits that you cobble together [into a theme]. I don't think it matters; I think it's however the writers approach it."



Dean is still recovering after his standoff with The Darkness.



> **"WE'RE GETTING BACK TO THE BASICS OF WHAT SUPERNATURAL IS: DRIVING DOWN THE ROAD, LISTENING TO ROCK MUSIC AND HUNTING THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT"**
> JENSEN ACKLES

With all the daddy issues and mom-angst that Sam (Jared Padalecki) and Dean carry around with them, things ought to get complicated with Mary's return, especially seeing as her boys grew up in the hunting world, a world she left behind years ago and hoped her family would never have to experience.

"You have to see it from both sides," explains Dabb. "In Mary's case, she was like, 'Dean's a precocious kid and Sam's a baby. They are going to be amazing, and I left my life to raise these kids.' Then she passes away and comes back, and in some ways she's incredibly proud of Sam and Dean, because they're heroes. She might not agree with hunting, but she understands what they do, and how great they are. She understands the good they've done in the world. She's conflicted because she knows the dangers of this life better than probably anyone. But then, from Sam and Dean's point of view, you've got somebody who their entire lives have been built around. Mom died; everything spirals from that."

"There's a lot of mixed emotion," says Ackles of Dean's reaction to Mary's return. "He's confused and excited, but you have to remember she's a stranger to ⇨



Sam, Dean and Mary come up against even more dark forces.



It wouldn't be *Supernatural* if a Winchester wasn't sad and/or bleeding.

him, and he's a stranger to her. Here's this woman who has now come back to life 30-odd years later, and she's also having to adjust to modern technology, the Internet, cell phones… Her adjustment is going to be a little strenuous for the relationship. Plus, she now has to deal with the fact that both of her sons are living hunter lives; that's the exact life she tried so desperately to get out of when she was alive.

"There's going to be a lot of uncertainty," he continues. "Obviously, it is his mom – but there's no relationship there. She died when he was four years old, so she's essentially a stranger to him. Nonetheless, she is a stranger who lends herself to making the boys vulnerable and susceptible to problems. It's another person that Dean's going to have to probably sacrifice himself for, so dealing with that is going to be difficult."

Going back to her initial roots as a hunter, Mary is set to be wasting demons and kicking arses alongside her sons this season. "It's crazy! I'm not 28 years old anymore – and yet, now I'm hunting," says Smith. "That's what I've always wanted to do, but I never had the opportunity before this. It's exciting. In the first episode, I had to flip Jensen and plant my heel on his jaw. He was a trooper about it. He's actually really good at that stuff, and I'm really not, so he's been helping me a lot."

Although Sam, Dean and now Mary are all carrying on the family business, the latter still has some issues with it and the danger that hunting presents. "They are hunters, and it's pretty clear that's something she never wanted," Smith explains. "Sam is literally five years older than Mary, and Dean is nine years older. And they are both gigantic people, but

> **"IT'S HIS MOM, BUT THERE'S NO RELATIONSHIP. SHE DIED WHEN HE WAS FOUR, SO SHE'S A STRANGER TO HIM"**
> SAMANTHA SMITH





Season 12 brings with it a whole new host of demons, spooks and more.

I think that once you're a mom, you're always a mom. I liken it to when a person would give up a baby for adoption and they don't see them since an infant, but then they hunt down their mom when they're an adult. That's still your baby. Even though she's been gone for 33 years, they're still [her] children. It's a little bit of a mind-warp, but I think that bond is there, for sure. It's going to be fun to explore that and boss them around a little bit."

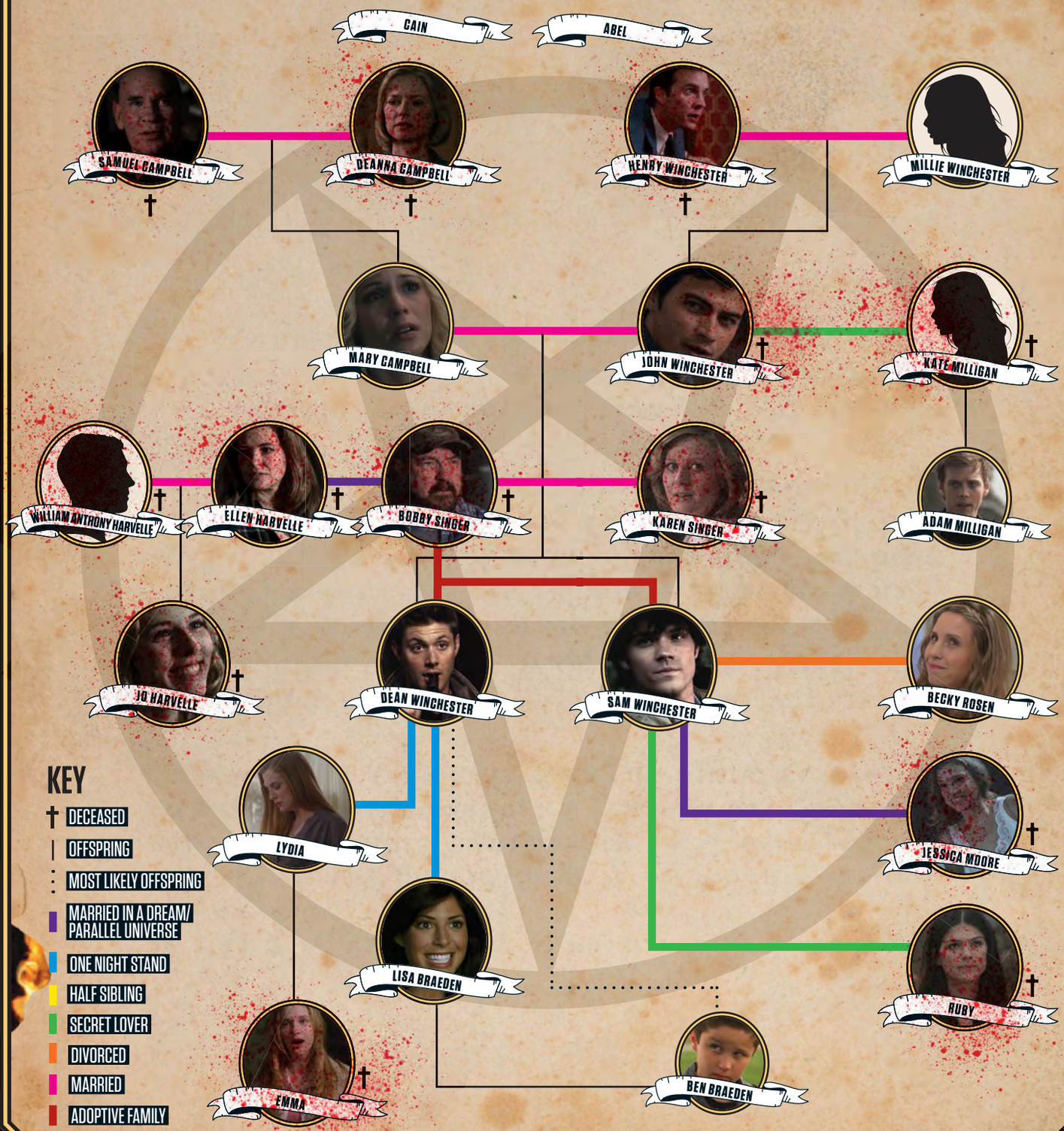
ON SUPERNATURAL, ART DOESN'T IMITATE LIFE – IT DOES THE EXACT OPPOSITE. WHILE SAM AND DEAN ARE CONSTANTLY WEEPING WHEN THE OTHER DIES FOR the millionth time, and raging over their parents being absent, liars, dead or all three, the cast and crew of the show are one big, happy family.

"I know we're working on Season 12, but it's still a show that we're all passionate about," Ackles tells us. "We still love telling these stories. I still love playing this character. I always say that as long as I can continue to play Dean, it doesn't matter what scenario you put him in. It can pretty much go anywhere because we're not bound by reality. I think we've certainly jumped the shark several times. Even going back to 'The French Mistake', when they were like, 'Listen, we're going to be using your name, and you're going to be Jensen', I'm like, 'Hang on! But I'm also going to be playing Dean?' They're like, 'Yes.' I'm like, 'Cool, call me whatever you want.' I take solace in that and pride that you can put him in any scenario. I always enjoy playing this character."

Though Ackles knows Dean Winchester back to front, fans of the

FAMILY DON'T END IN BLOOD

There may only be three Winchesters left, but if Supernatural taught us anything it's that life doesn't always end with death...



show occasionally successfully throw him off with theories and questions. "I have certainly had questions that have perplexed me, where I've said, 'Oh, I've never thought about it like that, but yeah,'" he says. "I love that. Essentially that's what art is; it's open to interpretation. People can see things differently, it can inspire them in a different way – and they can enjoy different aspects of it than the next person. I love being a part of a world that supplies that.

"It's always refreshing when somebody points out a story-point or points out a character-point that I hadn't seen that way, but that makes perfect sense. Sometimes it's fun to argue, 'Nope, that's not what I was going for. That's not what that means.' It's something that I love talking about. I love the show, I love the people I work with, and I love the fans and the people who take an interest in what we do. It's still fun after 12 years."

Ackles and *Supernatural* fans all over the world aren't the only ones who are going to miss the show when it eventually comes to an end, whenever that day may be. Since day one, *Supernatural* has meant a lot to a lot of different people.

"Without being grand, I like the fact that it binds together so many different people with common issues and common causes," says Sheppard. "Stuff that we're all dealing with at different levels, or if we're not directly dealing with them, we have friends dealing with them. To be humbled again and again and again by people choosing us as a catalyst to come together is a fantastic thing. We've been honoured.

"To me, there are so many good things that come as a result of the show," he continues. "It brings a lot of people together in a lot of very positive ways, such as the stuff we're doing with mental health issues [as a survivor of depression, Jared Padalecki has played a big role in campaigning for the cause, along with his fellow cast members] and the stuff we're doing with [Castiel actor] Misha Collins' charity project [the Gishwhes scavenger hunt]. I'm really proud to be part of that. That's the most humbling part of this job. That's what *Supernatural* has meant to me – way more than the sum of its parts. We have incredible fans, incredible circumstances and it's great fun to go to work. Plus, I have great co-stars to play with. I love it. I mean, what a way to make a living!"

> "THAT'S THE MOST HUMBLING PART: WHAT SUPERNATURAL HAS MEANT TO ME – WAY MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS"
> JENSEN ACKLES



Rick Springfield has joined the cast as fading rock star/vessel Vince Vicente.

Supernatural Season 12 will air on E4 in 2017.



Castiel (Misha Collins) is back to help the Winchesters when things get tough.

REVENGE OF THE NERDS

Who's the biggest geek icon in Supernatural's recurring cast?



TY OLSSON (BENNY LAFITTE)

THE 100, CONTINUUM, IZOMBIE, GODZILLA, THE TOMORROW PEOPLE, ARROW, FALLING SKIES, VOLTRON FORCE, ONCE UPON A TIME, RISE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, TWILIGHT: BREAKING DAWN, EUREKA, V, BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, STARGATE SG-1, ANDROMEDA, X-MEN 2, THE X-FILES

Though he's not as well-known as other cast members, Olsson comes out on top with bit roles in all your favourite shows.

MARK SHEPPARD (CROWLEY)

FIREFLY, WAREHOUSE 13, DOCTOR WHO, CHUCK, DOLLHOUSE, BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, BIONIC WOMAN, CHARMED, STAR TREK: VOYAGER, THE X-FILES

Sheppard was a favourite to win, having guest starred in some cult classics, before Olsson completely swept the floor with him.

SEBASTIAN ROCHÉ (BALTHAZAR)

THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, THE ORIGINALS, ONCE UPON A TIME, GRIMM, THE VAMPIRE DIARIES, FRINGE, BEOWULF, CHARMED

Balthazar may be long gone, but Roché is still one of those actors that pop up in guest roles in your shows every now and then.

JEFFREY DEAN MORGAN (JOHN WINCHESTER)

THE WALKING DEAD, EXTANT, WATCHMEN, BATMAN V SUPERMAN, JONAH HEX, STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE, ANGEL

The Winchesters' dad was a genre icon in the making long before he was smashing people's heads in on *The Walking Dead*.

FELICIA DAY (CHARLIE BRADBURY)

CON MAN, THE GUILD, EUREKA, DOLLHOUSE, DR HORRIBLE'S SING-ALONG BLOG, BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

Surprisingly low on this list, TV isn't her true home; she's unstoppable on the Internet.

JIM BEAVER (BOBBY SINGER)

CRIMSON PEAK, REVOLUTION, STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE, 3RD ROCK FROM THE SUN, THE X-FILES, LOIS & CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN

Everyone's favourite has quite the rap sheet.

MARK PELLEGRINO (LUCIFER)

THE RETURNED, THE TOMORROW PEOPLE, BEING HUMAN (US), REVOLUTION, CHUCK, LOST

Playing Lucifer clearly wasn't enough for Pellegrino; he often gets cast as villains or characters with troubled pasts.

SAMANTHA FERRIS (ELLEN HARVELLE)

V, BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, THE 4400, SMALLVILLE, STARGATE SG-1

Before she was pulling pints at Harvelle's Roadhouse, Ferris was showing up in all sorts of spacey cult series.

LAUREN COHAN (BELA TALBOT)

BATMAN V SUPERMAN, THE WALKING DEAD, THE VAMPIRE DIARIES, CHUCK

Thanks to her turn as Maggie Greene in *The Walking Dead*, Cohan is a lot more well known now than in her Bela Talbot days.

ADRIANNE PALICKI (JESSICA MOORE)

AGENTS OF SHIELD, GI JOE: RETALIATION, LEGION, SMALLVILLE

Palicki would be a higher up on the list if the *Wonder Woman* TV series she was starring in didn't get pulled from production.

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STAR-CROS



WORDS
POPPY-JAY PALMER

TWO OF THE PLANET'S HOTTEST STARS – **JENNIFER LAWRENCE** AND **CHRIS PRATT** – EMBARK ON AN EPIC TRIP ACROSS THE UNIVERSE THIS CHRISTMAS, AND FALL FOR EACH OTHER ALONG THE WAY. WE SPEAK TO **LAWRENCE, PRATT,** AND SCREENWRITER **JON SPAIHTS** ABOUT **PASSENGERS** AND LOVE IN SPACE...

DEVELOPMENT HELL ISN'T SO MUCH A PLACE AS A STATE OF BEING. NO FILM WANTS TO BE THERE, AND VERY FEW GET OUT. OCCASIONALLY, SOME HIGHER POWER WILL SWOOP IN AND SCOOP OUT THE BEST FILM OF A TRICKY BUNCH, AND HELP IT BACK ONTO THE GREEN-LIGHT TRACK. SCI-FI romance *Passengers* – directed by Morten Tyldum (*The Imitation Game*) and written by Jon Spaihts (*Doctor Strange*) – is one of the lucky few that gets to see the light of day again after years in purgatory.

Before it got a studio, a crew and an all-star cast, the film was put on the Black List – Hollywood's annual survey of the 'most liked' film screenplays that are yet to be produced – in 2007. Since then, the script has been admired,



SED LOVERS



JENNIFER LAWRENCE
ON THE CAST AND CREW

"It's been fantastic. Chris Pratt is the nicest, funniest person in the world, so he's wonderful to get to work with and he is a great actor. Morten [Tyldum] is fantastic, and he is creating a really wonderful world here. He is good with actors, 'cause I am always really bad with homework and I always forget [to read lines] the night before and stuff, so he knows I don't always know where my character is coming from. He is very good with actors, and Rodrigo Prieto, our DP, is making it just beautiful, and it looks great. I am excited to see this one..."

bought, auctioned off, bought again, cast and recast (Keanu Reeves and Reese Witherspoon were reportedly involved), with the budget expanding from $35 million with Weinstein Co to $120-plus with Columbia Pictures along the way.

But if Spaihts' script was so impressive, why has it taken so long for someone to make a film out of it? "It's a very unusual film; a bit of a feathered fish," explains Spaihts. "Hollywood proceeds most comfortably in an informed precedent. They always like to know that it's just like this other film that made loads of money. *Passengers* isn't like any film.

"It has a very grand setting – it's set entirely in a luxury ship, which is not cheap to render – and it has a very small cast. Its action ranges from existential drama to cued action spectacle. In that way it is unlike most other movies. It's more of a survival film than a thriller in that the antagonist in the movie is the predicament. It's like a movie about someone stuck on a sinking ship… the antagonist is simply nature."

What also makes *Passengers* unusual is the fact that it's an epic romance just as much – or perhaps more – as it is a sci-fi blockbuster. Spaihts says that as a writer, romance comes naturally to him. "More of the original sci-fi movies I cook up tend to have a big love story in the middle of them just because I'm a highly romantic character," he explains. "That's what I like. In this instance, the science fiction setting enabled me to tell a love story with tremendous stakes, with decisions that had life-shattering ramifications.

"While the underpinning of *Passengers* is illogical and hard sci-fi, all of the fallout and all of the actual action of the story is very human and very emotional and relationship-based. That is often the best storytelling, when the sci-fi is just not there to occupy the spotlight, and you say, 'Wow, those are fabulous robots! Those are fabulous laser beams!' but rather it exists in the scaffolding of a human story."

Outside of YA circles, it's rare that sci-fi blockbusters like *Passengers* revolve so heavily around romance. Sure, there will almost always be a romantic storyline thrown in there somewhere, like Han and Leia or Sarah Connor and Kyle Reese, but we don't often see sci-fi films that revolve their stories around a couple in love.

As an old romantic, Spaihts believes that more sci-fi screenwriters and filmmakers should explore romance to a greater extent in their work. "There's really just James Cameron doing it as ⇨

> "I WAS LOOKING FOR A SCI-FI STORY SEED THAT WOULD CAPTURE THE WONDER I REMEMBERED FROM SCI-FI GROWING UP"
> JON SPAIHTS



well as anybody," he says. "He's a devotee of classic melodrama, and I say that with no deprecation. He loves a good love story, and will set them in a sci-fi story, in a period piece… I have that in common with him. I like the occasional heart, and I think there's a lot of room for love stories in sci-fi, especially in film, and I think it is rather unexplored terrain."

AURORA (JENNIFER LAWRENCE) AND JIM (CHRIS PRATT) MAKE UP THE COUPLE IN PASSENGERS. AURORA IS A WRITER FROM NEW YORK WITH A KEEN interest in cosmic travel, while Jim is a mechanical engineer from Denver who wants to get away from his life on Earth. When Spaihts first wrote the screenplay, Lawrence and Pratt were nowhere near as big as they are now, with only a handful of screen credits between them. Spaihts had no one particular in mind for Aurora and Jim, but the two leads have managed to beautifully embody them as he'd imaged them all those years ago.

"They have a wonderful chemistry, and there's a real truthfulness to their portrayals," says Spaihts. "They beautifully render the culture shock between the two of them, because even though they're coming from the same world, one comes from a big city and the other comes from a little one. One is a manual labourer, and one is a writer, an artist. They are hoping across a gulf, even though they are distant neighbours back on Earth. I think Chris and Jen got that and did an amazing job on it. The chemistry between them as people as well as characters was very strong."

Spaihts' previous work use darkness and the unknown as a storytelling tool. His upcoming films – remakes of *Van Helsing* and *The Mummy*, and *Pacific Rim*'s sequel – are set to venture even further into the world of shadows and monsters. With *Passengers*, he wanted to tap into something brighter.

"I was looking for a sci-fi story seed that would capture some of the wonder, exuberance and optimism that I remembered from sci-fi I had growing up," Spaihts tells us. "There has been a trend towards grey dystopia in science fiction films, and while I've enjoyed many of those movies, something in me longs for a little more joy. So I started thinking about stories that would unfold in novel settings, and the notion of a colony ship came to me. It's more of a realistic space flight, I suppose, which confronts interstellar distances without the magic of hyperspace or warp drive."

When Spaihts started thinking about colony ships and the idea of using one as a setting, he realised that there were only two ways to do it: the characters can either go onto a generation ship where everyone stays awake and has babies, and the population continues on the way to somewhere out in space, or everyone goes to sleep for the duration of the journey.

"[Of course, it's] not thrilling storytelling if everyone's asleep," jokes Spaihts. "That brought me to the notion of what it might be like if someone woke up and there was no way to get back to sleep. The minute that notion came to me, the rest of the story unfolded by what felt like necessary steps. It seemed like the next thing that happened, the next thing that happened, the next thing that happen was almost predestined, as if the seed contained the whole story in it."







Aurora (Jennifer Lawrence) and James (Chris Pratt) are space's most photogenic couple.

PASSENGERS SITS ON THE EDGE OF A COUPLE OF DIFFERENT TROPES OF HARD SCIENCE FICTION. "WE HAD RECENTLY A SERIES OF VERY GROUNDED SPACE FILMS like *Gravity* and *The Martian* that took liberties, but are essentially operating in a proximate real world with technology that we either have today or might have [soon]," explains Spaihts, "and then beyond that, there's space opera. You've got ongoing *Star Wars* movies, *Guardians Of The Galaxy* where the ships are largely magic and you can jaunt from planet to planet to some faster-than-light mode of travel. *Passengers* splits the difference.

"It's set centuries in the future in a time when there are technologies that look rather magical to our present eye, but it's still set in a rigorous physical world. There is no hyperspace, there is no magic

CHRIS PRATT
ON SAYING YES

"There wasn't a single person on my team that didn't fall immediately in love with the *Passengers* script. It's so cool and it's so good, and the prospect of doing it with Jennifer was amazing. I remember that someone had me read it and say I think Jennifer might star in it, and so when I was reading it I kind of pictured her, so it was kind of the perfect storm. I got my fingers crossed really, hoping that it continues to go and it comes together in a way that is Hollywood so anything can happen. But I will tell you, that was a cool one, and that was really easy to say yes to."

If you're going to have a robot butler then who better than Michael Sheen?



artificial gravity, and there are no force field retractor beams… In reality, seven centuries from now, clothing and spoken dialect would have mutated to the point of being unrecognisable… If you dialled the clock back and ended up in Elizabethan England, you'd barely understand the language, and all the customs and dress would be radically different. But if you actually tried to create a hypothetical future with a dialect, style and culture of its own, people will spend the movie just decoding that and never get to the human story and the core of it. You're too busy decrypting the culture."

Spaihts took inspiration from the world of *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* author Douglas Adams to create a future that wasn't overly complicated. "He was a pioneer in telling magical sci-fi stories that were culturally infinitely familiar," he says. "People were still going to the doctor and going on dates and complaining about their boss at the office, even though they were in a giant space station in a nebula halfway across the galaxy. It gave you license to imagine the minutiae of human life in this fantastical context by keeping the trappings familiar outside of the hard sci-fi.

"I grew up reading sci-fi and seeped myself in it, particularly the golden age and post-war that unfolded on colossal scales," he continues. "I think my imagination was formed to some extent by that kind of thing. I think as human beings, getting our hearts broken, chasing dreams, sometimes getting them, sometimes being denied, we have cataclysmic interior experiences. The world splits in two, we turn to stone, the sky turns to fire, it's raining roses… We have profoundly intense emotional experiences, and what sci-fi makes it possible to do is create an exterior canvas as grand as those interior experiences, and hold up a mirror to what we know in our hearts and minds, and I think that moves me profoundly."

Passengers will be released in cinemas on 23 December.

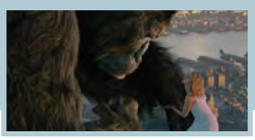
THE BOOK OF LOVE

We reimagine genre's classic relationships as pulp romance novels…



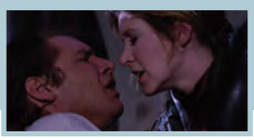
PRIDE AND PRIMATE
KING KONG & ANN DARROW

Ann Darrow is just a stunningly beautiful actress, looking to get away from the bright lights of the big city. Hopping aboard the first ship to a mysterious island, she could never have predicted how a great, hairy ape came into her life to violently sweep her off her feet.



HE KNEW THAT SHE LOVED HIM
HAN SOLO & LEIA ORGANA

She's a Princess. He's a scruffy-looking nerf herder. They should never have crossed paths. They shouldn't trust each other, but they do. And they're not related, so there's that. A common goal brings them together in a way only a rebellion can.



YOU ARE MY DESIGN
WILL GRAHAM & HANNIBAL LECTER

Will likes to solve crimes; Hannibal likes to commit them, but will they be able to commit? From colleagues to friends to enemies to lovers, they attempt to overcome the obstacles keeping them apart… namely cannibalism.



FACE IT, TIGER… YOU JUST HIT THE JACKPOT
SPIDER-MAN & MARY-JANE WATSON

Pete's Spidey sense wasn't the only thing tingling when he met his neighbour, MJ. As soon as he set eyes on her, he knew he wanted them to be more than friends. He'll settle for friends with benefits for now…



© Kevin McGivern



CASTLE OF ILLUSION



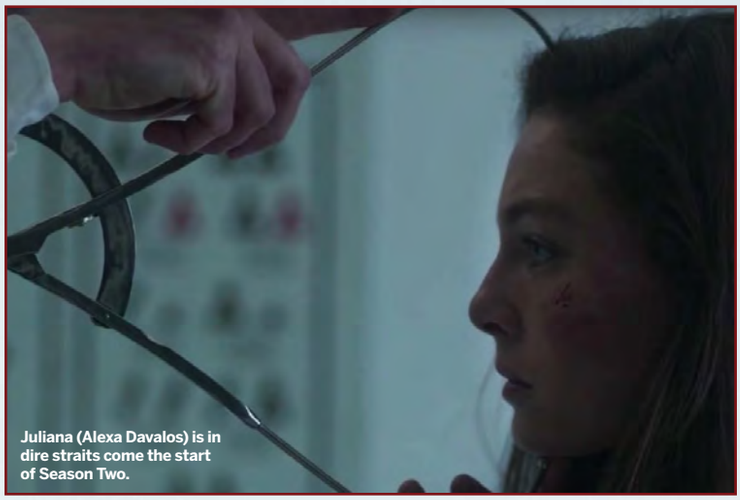
THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE IS BACK WITH NEW CHARACTERS, A DIFFERENT SHOWRUNNER AND A RENEWED PURPOSE. WE SPOKE TO THE CAST AND CREW OF AMAZON'S ALT-HISTORY HIT ABOUT RETURNING TO DYSTOPIA...

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**
INTERVIEWS **EDWARD GROSS**

"IT CAN NEVER HAPPEN IN THE REAL WORLD." FOR A LONG TIME, FICTION LIKE THE SORT SEEN IN THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE HAS BEEN VIEWED LESS AS A CAUTIONARY TALE AND MORE AS A HORROR STORY – IT COULD NEVER POSSIBLY HAPPEN IN THE REAL WORLD.

Yet in the contemporary political climate, the setting of *The Man In The High Castle* – an alternate one in which the Axis forces won World War II and subsequently took over the world – doesn't seem all that far-fetched anymore. Okay, maybe we're being dramatic – there are no jackbooted Stormtroopers marching in to drag us out of our offices, after all – but it's hard to deny the climate of xenophobia that has permeated today's atmosphere. In an era of far-right rhetoric, Brexit and Donald Trump (who may well be president of the US by the time you read this), dystopias don't seem quite so far-fetched anymore.

"I think it's a message for us as a society to wake up and realise that these things are real, these things can happen, and they could have happened," says Luke Kleintank, whose character Joe Blake finds himself at a crossroads as Season Two commences. "It is prevalent in the world we live today, and that fear and greed and all these things are ingredients to create war. The beautiful thing about all these characters is they believe in something more. They believe in integrity and peace. We live by that motto, and we don't live in fear. We embrace one another as individuals, and as people. We can live a peaceful life."



Juliana (Alexa Davalos) is in dire straits come the start of Season Two.

In the action-packed ending of the first season, one of the standout scenes sees Tagomi (Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa) suddenly finding himself in yet another alternate universe after meditating with Juliana's (Alexa Davalos) charm – which funnily enough, greatly resembles our own world. People who have read Philip K Dick's classic novel may have been scratching their heads at this point, and it does beg the question of whether further changes are in store. David W Zucker – who replaces the outgoing Frank Spotnitz as executive producer – has mixed thoughts when it comes to this.

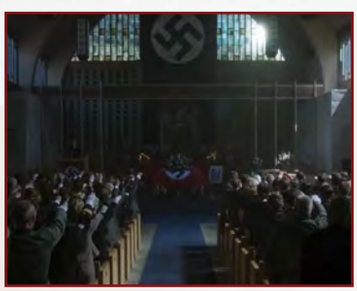
"I don't think we ever feel like we're moving away from the book. I think that we are sort of moving forward shoulder-to-shoulder with the book. There's much we haven't utilised that we'll continually be drawing from. I don't think it's like *Game Of Thrones* and some of the other shows, where there's a much larger structural narrative – that's not how the book, narratively, exists. We're constantly referring back to it to try to understand and see what evolutions are possible that are fulfilling the premise of that book."

Evolution seems to be the key word here – the main characters all went on their own extensive stories throughout Season One. In addition to Joe's woes with his Nazi employers, Juliana is in her own limbo, having allowed Joe to abscond to Mexico in her place; John Smith (Rupert Sewell) is rising the ranks, having proved his loyalty to Hitler himself; and Frank (Rupert Evans) is desolate, having seen his friend Ed (DJ Qualls) take the rap for him. His journey has been the most dramatic, having gone from politically neutral to radicalised after being imprisoned, tortured and seeing his family executed.

"We leave Season One in an extraordinary place, with Ed being led into jail and Juliana having not gone through with what she promised," recalls Evans. "There's a huge fallout from the end of Season One, and that's looked at early on in Season Two, and from that everything's changed for everybody. Life will never be quite the same again, and I think in Season Two, Frank is trying to work out how he is going to live his life."

Evans continues of his dramatic choices, "[He] starts to stand up and have an opinion about the way of living in this crazy world. It goes down a really dark path and kind of gets involved in some stuff, which is all about him trying to understand and deal with the emotional aspect of Season One: the repercussions of the death of his sister and his niece and nephew, and the anger and sense of betrayal that comes out of Season One. His actions are all driven by that. It's a darker kind of place." ⤳





> **"IT'S A MESSAGE FOR US AS A SOCIETY TO WAKE UP AND REALISE THAT THESE THINGS ARE REAL AND THAT THESE THINGS CAN HAPPEN"**
> **LUKE KLEINTANK**



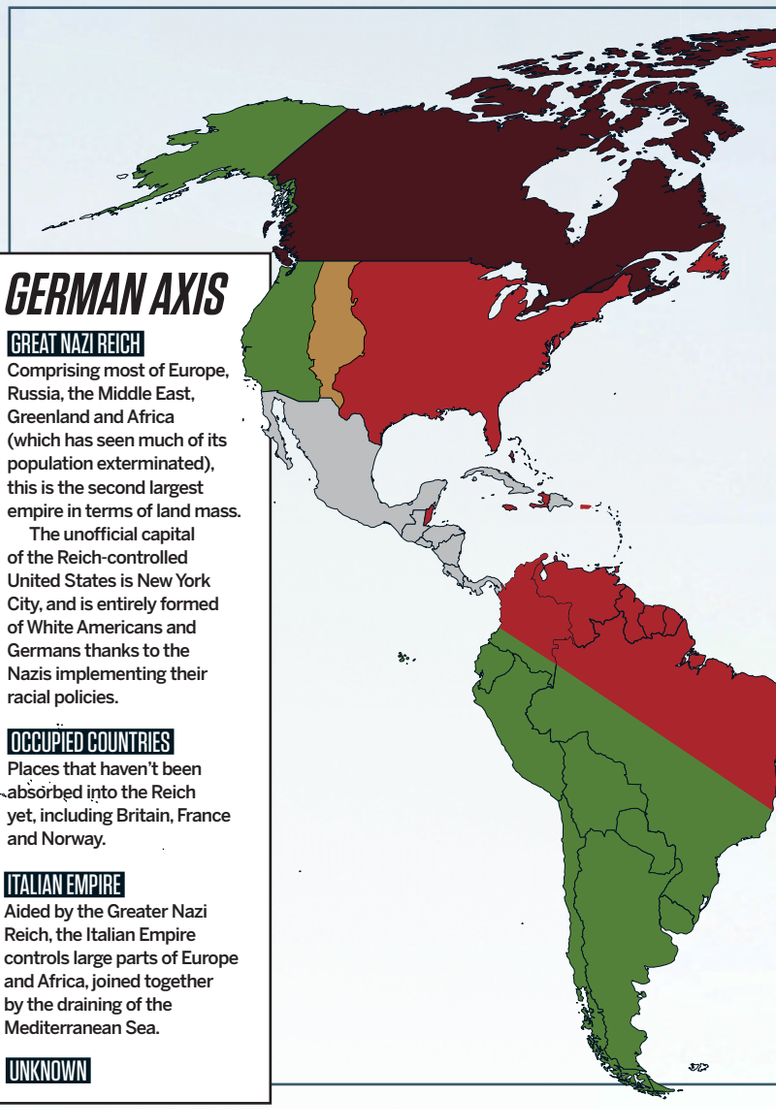
"He's going deeper and deeper into his own personal life," Kleintank elaborates on Joe's Season Two storyline. "He's going deeper into the Nazi empire… he's going into the lion's den. He can either face the lion, talking about the Nazi world, and he can fight the motherfucker. He doesn't have to. He can sit down and let it eat him, or he can run away. He's faced with that conflict of what he wants to do. Really that's it. That's the big question: can he affect change? Or does he want change in the world he lives in?

"You dive deeper into who he is as a person, because at this point you don't know," Kleintank says of Joe's motivations, "No idea why he's doing what he's doing, who he is or where he comes from. You're going to find out why he's doing what he's doing, who he is and where he comes from."

EVEN FOR THE CHARACTERS WHO ARE BENEFICIARIES OF THE NAZIS' WORLD ORDER, THEY STILL HAVE THEIR PROBLEMS. FOR SMITH, THE REVELATION that his son was inflicted by a wasting disease that would eventually leave him incapacitated came as a punch in the gut – in a world where the disabled and terminally ill are euthanised before being cremated, their ashes left to rain down like snowflakes, his condition is a death sentence. As Sewell tells us though, this is just one facet of his Season Two storyline.

"Some stuff happens, and they have an effect on him. A lot of the story that's set up, the key problems for him that are set up at the end of the first season take a long time, and get bigger and bigger through the course of the second season. He ascends the hierarchy in the Reich. He's already very high, but he ends it having pleased the boss. That continues. He's given greater responsibility to support and protect the Reich, and that same thing is on the verge of devouring his son. Those two things clash, so there's that going on."

Indeed, Smith is the prime example of the extremes of moral ambiguity that permeate the show. While he is a loving father and family man, he also presides over torture and isn't averse to pushing rivals off of buildings. He has carved out



GERMAN AXIS

GREAT NAZI REICH
Comprising most of Europe, Russia, the Middle East, Greenland and Africa (which has seen much of its population exterminated), this is the second largest empire in terms of land mass.

The unofficial capital of the Reich-controlled United States is New York City, and is entirely formed of White Americans and Germans thanks to the Nazis implementing their racial policies.

OCCUPIED COUNTRIES
Places that haven't been absorbed into the Reich yet, including Britain, France and Norway.

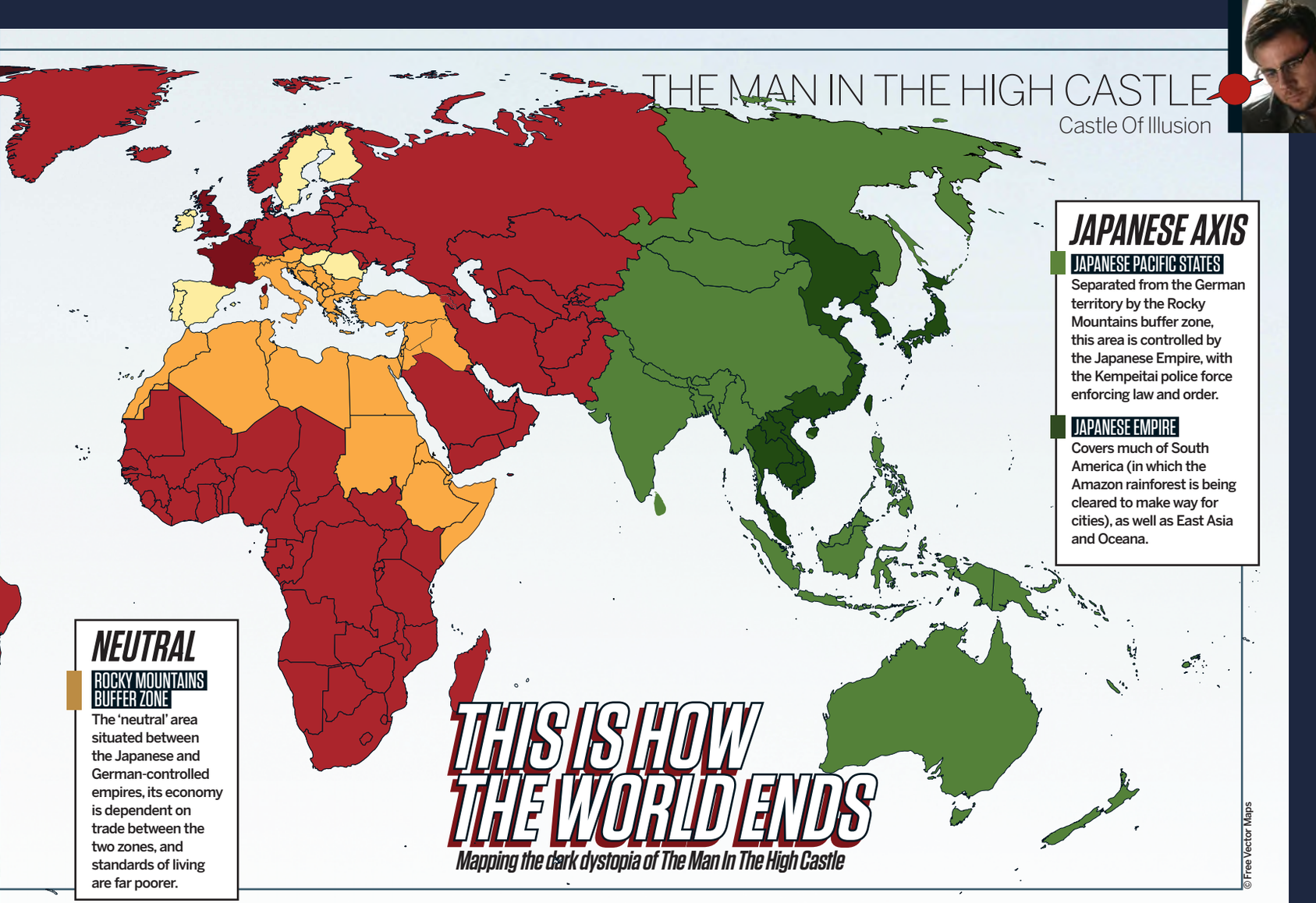
ITALIAN EMPIRE
Aided by the Greater Nazi Reich, the Italian Empire controls large parts of Europe and Africa, joined together by the draining of the Mediterranean Sea.

UNKNOWN



John Smith (Rufus Sewell) finds his loyalties conflicted.

> "HE'S GIVEN GREATER RESPONSIBILITY TO THE REICH, THE SAME THING THAT IS ON THE VERGE OF DEVOURING HIS SON"
> RUFUS SEWELL





Chief Inspector Kido (Joel de la Fuente) rather fortuitously remains in a position of power.



an existence for himself in what can be viewed in a more perfunctory manner as an evil world, but does that make him evil? Sewell doesn't think so.

"He's not a monster; he's a human. The only people who do this shit are humans. We're in a place now where half of this business is about taking real evil things and turning them into cartoons."

He goes on to explain why it is so prevalent in today's society, "Why is it that Nazis are so prone to being rendered Space Nazis, Zombie Nazis, Vampire Nazis, Ghost Nazis? Why do they have to be supernatural? Because the reality is, it was people like people in this room. If everyone in this room right now had been in Germany, some of them would have lasted longer than others.

"The original Nazis were obviously really misshapen, super fucked-up," Sewell continues, discussing what it is that makes the perception of reality so terrifying. "But then, the entire country went with them. That's crazy. People say, 'What would you have done?' 'Oh, I'd have left the country, I'd have done this and done that.' Hitler said something really frightening when talking about dissidents. He said, 'I don't worry about these old people who say they don't like me. I have their children.'

"You hear that and you just think, 'Fuck.' Are you going to leave? You think of it that way. The whole country, people who otherwise weren't necessarily anti-Semitic, went along with it. The first thing they did was cut off access to news from the rest of the world. From 1937 onward, everyone in Nazi Germany believed that everyone was out to get them. Everyone. They finally thought they were sticking up for themselves, because everyone in the country had been convinced."

The aftermath of this kind of indoctrination will be revealed in the form of some of the new characters. Callum Keith Rennie will play Gary Connell, the leader of the West Coast Resistant Movement; Sebastian Roché is Martin Heusmann, Joe's estranged father and a high-ranking figure in the Reich; and Bella Heathcote is Nicole Becker, a young German filmmaker. As she tells us, her character is part of a new generation – one far removed from the atrocities committed by their ancestors.

"She's passionate about the environment, she's very privileged and very wealthy, and that allows her an independence that she wouldn't have been able to have in this world had that not been the case," says Heathcote. "She loves to party, and she loves to flirt. She's part of this new generation of Nazis, who are like the offspring of the perpetrators of these crimes, but I think she and her friends were not into any of these ideologies. We're not hippies, but we're really into the environment and nature."

DESPITE THE SHOW'S SUCCESS ON AMAZON, THIS YEAR WILL SEE IT FACE A HOST OF NEW CHALLENGES. THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE EFFECTIVELY FOUND itself without a showrunner in between Spotnitz's departure and Zucker's arrival, and it's hard to shake the fact that historically, shows without a guiding hand haven't done so well. Zucker's aware of the challenge, however, not to mention the less-than-conventional approach that has been taken to creating Season Two.

Zucker acknowledges that the show is a tricky proposition. "Even while Frank was with us during that first year and a half, we were divided between London, Vancouver and LA. It's not a way you would build a show, but we built it out of necessity, because those who were most important to the realisation of the show were where they were. I think – and fans will ultimately decide how successful we were this season – the foundation of what Frank created and the sheer dedication and commitment to this show that the ⇨

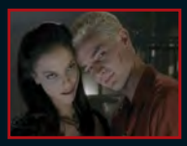


Frank (Rupert Evans) has gone from meek factory worker to radicalised rebel.

SECOND SEASON SYNDROME

How to do a good year 2

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER
Introduced classic characters like Spike, Oz, Druscilla and Angelus, and gave us one of the greatest season finales of all time as Buffy reluctantly put down Angel. Sniff.



AMERICAN HORROR STORY
Season One was mad enough, but *Asylum* took it to the next level, throwing in alien abductions, skin-harvesting serial killers, Nazi scientists, homicidal Santas and, er, Anne Frank.



UTOPIA
The Series Two opener remains one of the best episodes of TV we've seen, and the rest of the series expanded the mythology. Didn't stop it from being cancelled though.



...and how not to

TWIN PEAKS
Ill-advisedly solved the show's central murder mystery, then descended into increasingly odd storylines. The last two episodes redeemed it, but by then it was too late.



SLEEPY HOLLOW
Lost sight of what worked in the first season – namely the relationship between Ichabod and Abby – instead focusing more on the former. It only really went downhill from there, sadly.



HEROES
In fairness, things were hampered by the writers strike, but the characters took way too long to actually do anything. It seemed to forget what made it good in the first place.



> **"ONE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY THINGS ABOUT THIS JOB IS THAT WE REALLY HAVE BEEN TRUSTED WITH OUR INPUT. WE WEREN'T JUST INDULGED OR PUT UP WITH... IT WAS A VITAL PART OF THE PROCESS"**
> RUFUS SEWELL

actors, production designers, producers and writers all committed to this, and we ran it like a republic this year. I don't know any other show that could have operated like this."

Zucker admits to having to factor in what was best for the version of events addressed under the circumstances that they have faced. "I think, hopefully, people will respond. We're very proud of what we were able to do this year, and we'll look to find an even better way of accomplishing it next year. It's a learning process every year on a series, anyway – this one intensely so."

Unconventional as it may sound, at least it's still going. Considering how good Season One was, it would have been a crying shame if it had been derailed by behind-the-scenes drama. Luckily, this hasn't been the case. It's gearing up for a truly intriguing second year that steers away from the clichés that have characterised shows with similar themes.

Davalos, for one, speaks highly of where the show is heading. "The first season was a short period of time for these characters; it's two weeks in their lives. Think of the last two weeks of your own life. Think of what's gone on, imagine if the stakes were that high, and it was that convoluted in there. Terrifying. Coming back to the second season, we were all raring to get into these characters on a bigger level. With the first season as very much the birthplace, we planted a seed, and then we came back and there was a flower. It seemed like a natural progression."

"One of the extraordinary things about this job is that we really have been trusted with our input," says Sewell. "We weren't just indulged or put up with, but actually it was a vital part of the process after a while." On working with Spotnitz, he adds, "I would have regular calls with him when he was in Paris or London, whatever, every weekend to talk through the scripts, make suggestions and ask questions. After a while it became very much needed by both of us. That was part of the script process, and I wasn't the only person doing it. It's because they very quickly realised that this wasn't actors trying to gain advantage for themselves, but people who would rather play a small part in an episode if it made it a better thing."

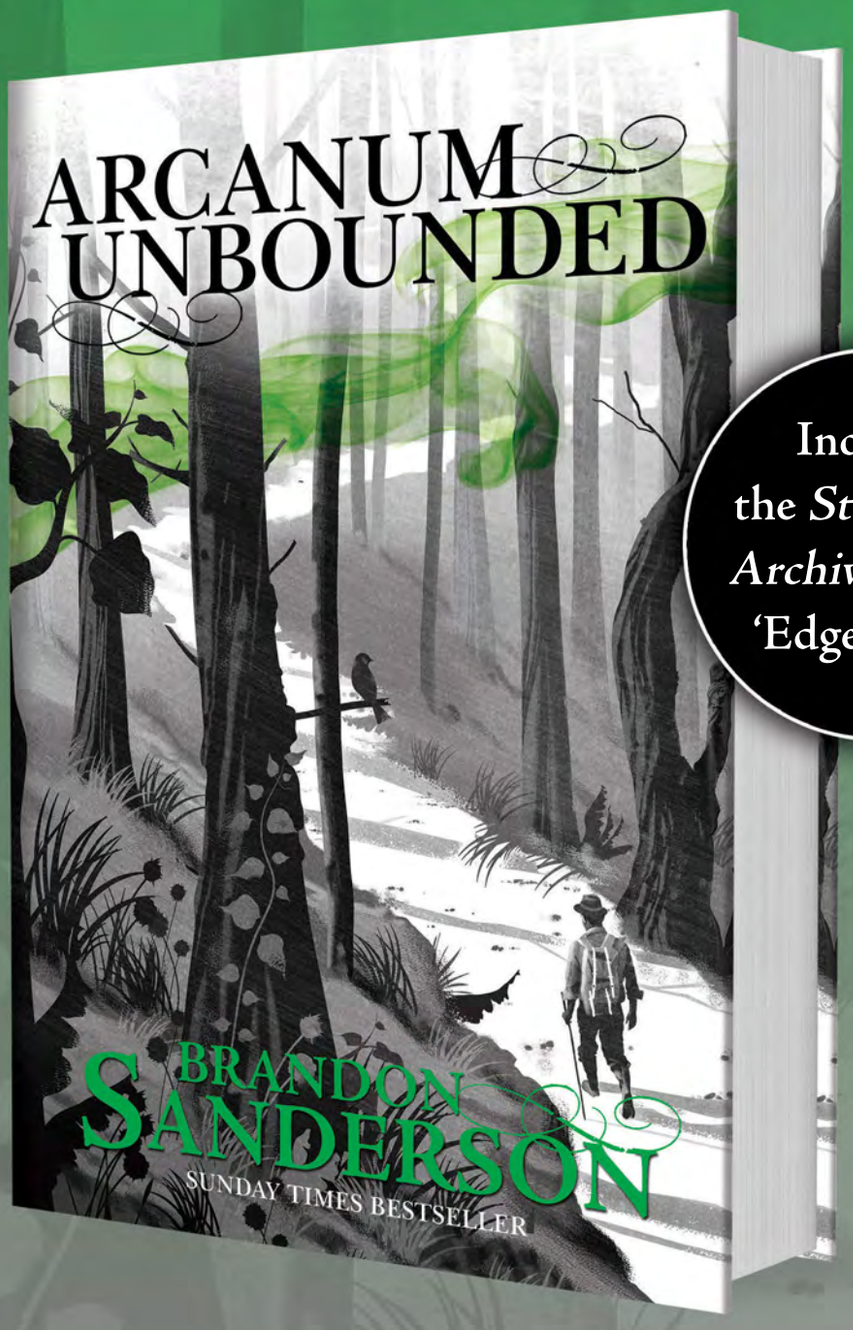
Rounding out our interview, Sewell makes it clear what working on the show means to the cast. "This was our chance to be in something we really cared about; that actually meant something. I just wanted to be in something I was really proud of. That gives you a lot of fight."

The Man In The High Castle: Season Two will be available to stream on Amazon Instant Video from 16 December.


Will Tagomi (Cary Hiroyuki-Tagawa) venture back into the other world?

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BRANDON SANDERSON



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VG

WHY SMALL-TOWN HORROR **I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER** IS THE **CULT CHILLER** WE NEED RIGHT NOW

Neighbourhood Watch

WORDS
JONATHAN HATFULL



SO MANY HORROR MOVIES FEEL THE SAME THESE DAYS. WE'RE BORED OF THE OMNIPRESENCE OF FOUND FOOTAGE AND THE BLUMHOUSE FORMULA, SO WHEN something dark, weird and genuinely surprising comes along, you take note. In Billy O'Brien's *I Am Not A Serial Killer*, a snow-bound small town is the backdrop for a sinister game of cat-and-mouse between John Wayne Cleaver (Max Records), a teenager who has been officially diagnosed as sociopathic, and his kindly neighbour Crowley (Christopher Lloyd), who John believes might be responsible for the growing number of murders.

It's horror, it has a rich seam of dark comedy, it's got a complicated and powerful emotional heart to it, and there's a lot more to it besides.

"That's one of the reasons that [Dan Wells' novel] grabbed me, because it's rare to find that combination," enthuses O'Brien. "It is a knife-edge when you're blurring genres, mixing humour with horror, and this book felt like a supernatural *Fargo* when I read it. And that was just wonderful!"

A REALLY TROUBLED TEEN

You don't see a lot of protagonists like John Wayne Cleaver. The 17-year-old is fascinated by serial killers, is aware of the fact that he might become one, and helps his mum (*Breaking Bad*'s Laura Fraser) in their basement mortuary after school while trying to do the right thing. "You're really fascinated by him, because he's really bright and really witty. Yes, he's got problems, and he doesn't have empathy for people, but he's trying to keep on the narrow path – he's trying not to kill anybody," O'Brien tells us.

"This is not a kid in school who, when he's being bullied, you fear for him. You fear that he'll kill the bully, and I'd never come across that before. He has no fear. We tried a voiceover, but when we stripped that off there was an air of danger suddenly. You don't trust that kid; you're on the edge of your seat."

A HARD SELL

With the... difficult protagonist and ambitious blend of tones, it's a film that's great to watch, but one that you have to imagine may have been tough to pitch. "Well, it only took six and a half years to get made!" laughs O'Brien. "If you're doing a rip-off of a Blumhouse film you'll get funding for it, because they're all hoping for a success like a Blumhouse film. But if your film combines a thriller, humour, family drama and horror, then it's going to be tricky, because as we discovered, we kept coming up against these walls all the time. It was a cheap film to make in the end. We had to make it cheap to get it made – at one point it was $3 million. We compared it to *Donnie Darko* to try and sell it to the financers, who were worried about the odd tone."

MAX RECORDS GROWS UP

The film boasts an incredible central performance from Max Records, who you may remember as the furious child at the centre of *Where The Wild Things Are*. "Dan Wells said, 'In the book I have the voiceover. In the film you have Max Records' face,'" enthuses O'Brien. "It's extraordinary; he's a 16-year-old kid. He's a lovely kid as well."

> **CHRISTOPHER LLOYD SAID THAT HE JUST DIDN'T GET SENT ODD SCRIPTS LIKE THAT**
> BILLY O'BRIEN

Records was attached to the film when O'Brien was first trying to put it together, and he tells us that he had the part nailed down even then. "We went to America with a 35mm camera. We went to Michigan and brought Max and his dad up from Portland, so I met this 13-year-old kid, and I was trying to direct him as you would a grown-up. I would do these long really boring motivational speeches, and he'd just go, 'Sounds good,' and he'd go on camera and do something completely different, and it was amazing."

THE MAGIC OF CHRISTOPHER LLOYD

Starring opposite Records is the great Christopher Lloyd, who puts in his best performance in years as the genial old fella across the street who loves his wife, appreciates his neighbours and may or may not be hiding something. It's great to see the veteran actor in a complex and creepy role like this, and O'Brien tells us that the actor was similarly excited by the opportunity.

"He said that he just didn't get sent odd scripts like that," he tells us. "The thing he really responded to is that it's a love story, and the way he could switch from kindly old man to just the look in his eyes going really dark is amazing. He's like a silent film actor – he uses his whole body, so even if he's in the distance, he does something. The camera might be across the street, but he's very aware of his own body – a lot of actors aren't – and he's got the physicality thing."

COLD DARK NIGHTS ON LOCATION

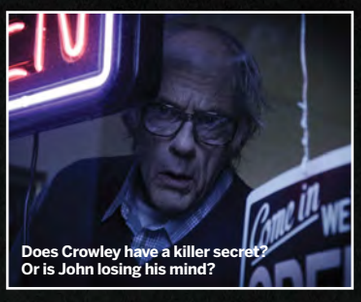
The film has an incredible atmosphere, which obviously has a lot to do with the stellar work from cinematographer Robbie Ryan and composer Adrian Johnson, but O'Brien stresses the importance of shooting on location. "Shooting is very tough physically, especially in minus-20-degree weather!" he laughs. "But I love the anarchy you get on a live-action shoot between crew, cast, location and weather conditions – if you stay alert you can spot bits of magic happening that nobody could have predicted."

It also gave him the opportunity to film in real mortuaries. "We worked with a wonderful undertaker, and he taught Max and Laura all about the embalming process. We shot in his actual prep room where they embalm the bodies, and every day he put a little *Far Side* cartoon on the light switch, and they were all to do with death!"

I Am Not A Serial Killer will be released in cinemas on 9 December.



Christopher Lloyd and Max Records star in *I Am Not A Serial Killer*.



Does Crowley have a killer secret? Or is John losing his mind?

YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

You wouldn't want to move next door to these guys...



JAME GUMB SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (1991)
He mostly keeps to himself, but those moths can be a bit of a nuisance. Friendly little dog, though.



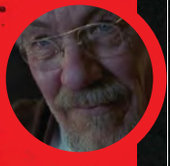
JERRY DANDRIDGE FRIGHT NIGHT (1985)
He seems nice enough, but don't be fooled! Jerry is a bloodsucking fiend, a creature of the night, and a goddam vampire!



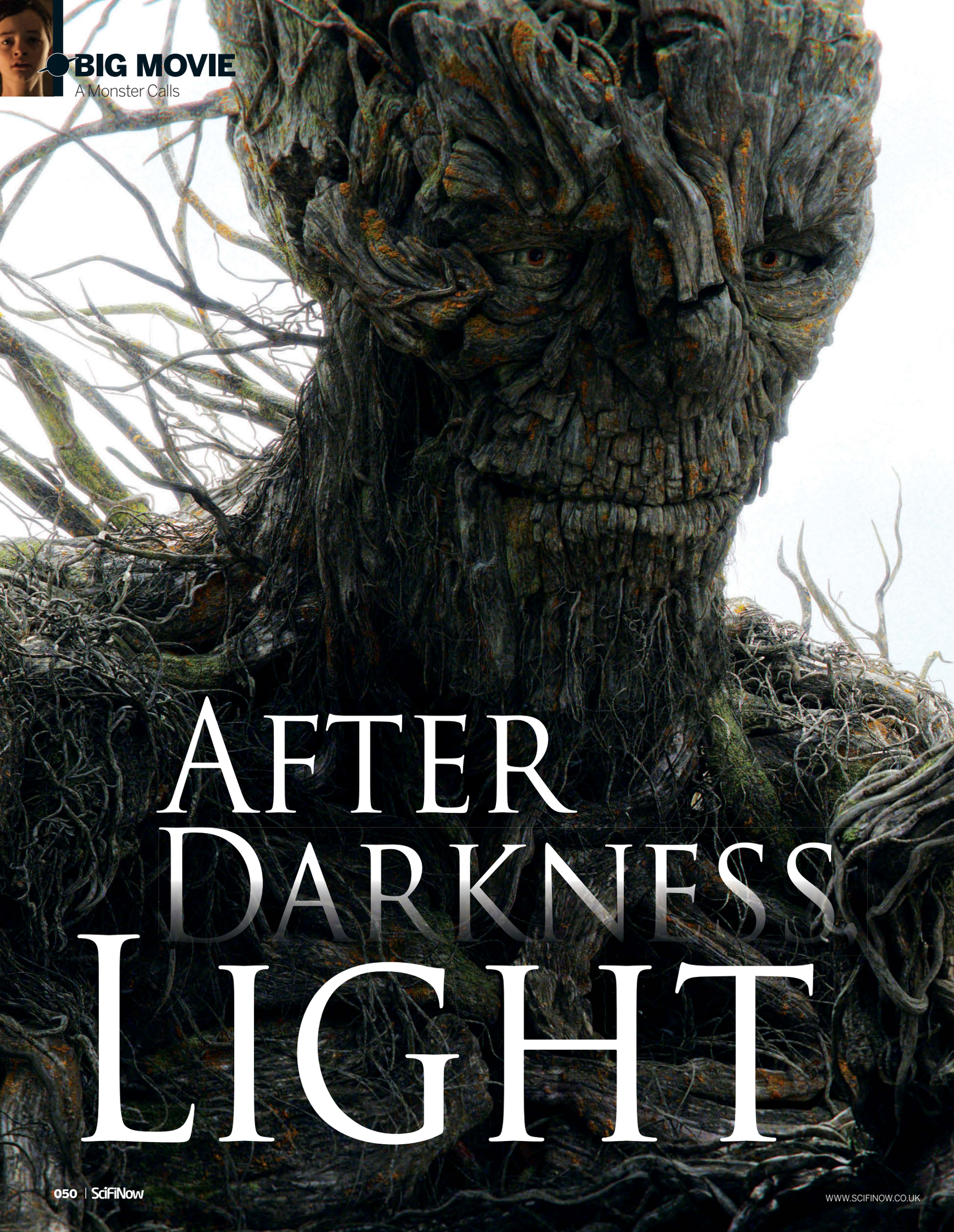
MOM AND DAD THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS (1991)
They are so reclusive it's scary. The glimpses we've snatched have made us glad that they don't get out much.



THE KLOPEKS THE 'BURBS (1989)
As Ray Peterson will tell you, there's just something weird about the Klopeks. They've got some buried secrets.



KURT DUSSANDER APT PUPIL (1982)
There's definitely something off about Mr Dussander. You wouldn't catch us in his basement.



AFTER DARKNESS, LIGHT



WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

DIRECTOR JA BAYONA TALKS ABOUT BREAKING HEARTS AND BRUTAL TRUTHS WITH DARK FAIRY TALE A MONSTER CALLS

WE OFTEN HEAR ABOUT HOW CHILDREN'S STORIES SHOULDN'T TALK DOWN TO THEIR target audience, that they shouldn't be afraid to be scary, and that more importantly, they should be honest. You'd be hard-pushed to find a tale as truthful as *A Monster Calls*. Based on the novel by Patrick Ness and Jim Kay, it's the story of Conor O'Malley (Lewis MacDougall), a young lad struggling to cope with the fact that his mother is dying of cancer. One night, Conor is visited by a monster, who claims that the boy has summoned him.

It's a powerful film that serves as a reminder of the importance of stories and acts as a moving portrayal of grief. It uses fantasy, but refuses to sugarcoat harsh truths or cheat its audience. To be perfectly frank, it's a film that you'll struggle to see through the tears, and it's a classic fairy tale in its use of magic and fantasy to help its young viewers.

"I had an immediate reaction to [the book]," director JA Bayona (*The Impossible*) tells us. "It's a very emotional story. At that time I was obsessed by how stories work, and Patrick Ness's book is about storytelling, so it was the perfect thing. Being able to dig into themes of storytelling was a very exciting way of trying to find out what is the ultimate meaning of what you do as a filmmaker."

Ness's novel was published in 2011 and illustrated by Jim Kay, and it is based on a story by the late Siobhan Dowd. She had started work on it after she was diagnosed with terminal cancer, but sadly passed away before she could write it. Ness took the characters and the concept and, with Kay, created something that struck a chord with readers: a book that looked at a very adult situation through the eyes of an angry child.

"Patrick's book is fantastic in that it deals with the psychology of a kid, and ⤳



he gives an extraordinary depiction of that," enthuses Bayona. "He takes the world of children very seriously, and I try to do the same with my movies. We were quite honest about all the themes in the story. The idea was to write a book to help kids deal with loss, so we had to be very careful about telling the story in the most honest possible way. The story deals with cancer and mourning, so we really had to be very careful. It was more about being truthful to the moment and not add to what was already on the page."

He was helped in that process by Ness himself, who wrote the film's screenplay, and Bayona tells us that they meshed quickly. "It's very interesting, because as you know the script was based on Patrick's book, but that was based on Siobhan Dowd's story," he explains. "So somehow the way that Patrick had the challenge and the job of bringing her story to his own book and making the story his own, I found myself doing the same, and he understood that perfectly. But we share a very collaborative process. Patrick is a really smart guy, and he has no ego at all. He understood what my approach was, and he embraced it, and was a great help in bringing that to the screen."

THE FILM IS SPLIT BETWEEN REALITY, IN WHICH CONOR STRUGGLES TO ACCEPT THE TRUTH ABOUT HIS MOTHER (FELICITY Jones) and battles his stern grandmother (Sigourney Weaver) and mostly absent father (Toby Kebbell); and fantasy, as the old yew tree (Liam Neeson) uproots itself from the church graveyard every night to find young Conor. In return for these three stories, which he claims will help the boy, the monster demands that Conor tell him a fourth tale: the nightmare that he has every night.

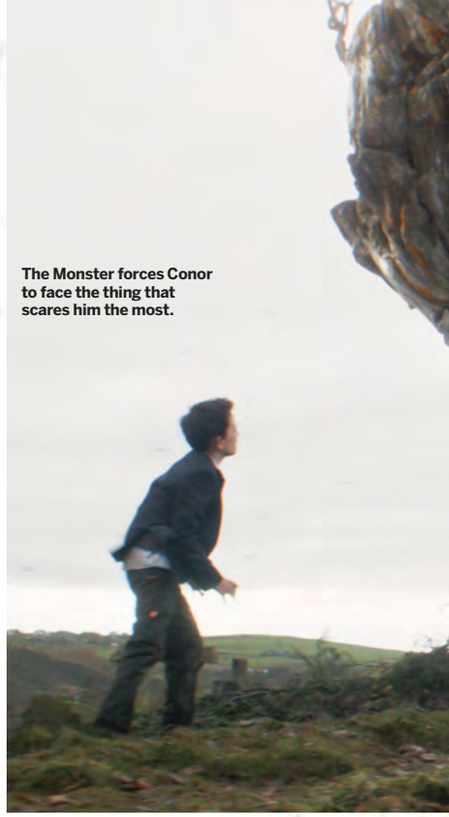
It's a lot to ask of a young actor: to not only manage the jump between the mo-cap fantasy and kitchen-sink reality, but also find the emotional core of a character as distraught as Conor. Luckily, MacDougall is absolutely superb. "We did a massive audition," Bayona remembers. "We wanted to be sure that we were casting the right kid, because Conor is in every single scene, and the whole story is seen through his eyes, so we had to be sure. I think that what made Lewis so different from the other kids is the fact that when we were doing auditions, he was playing them with rage. No other kid did that, and that's the exact same way that Conor plays it in the story. So there was this parallel between Lewis and Conor that was obvious in the first time we auditioned him. And my experience with him on the set was extraordinary. I don't have enough words to thank him for what he did in the film."

> "THE IDEA WAS TO WRITE A BOOK TO HELP KIDS TO DEAL WITH LOSS, TELLING THE STORY IN THE MOST HONEST POSSIBLE WAY"
> JA BAYONA

It obviously helps that he's surrounded by such an incredible cast. Jones (*Rogue One*) is tremendously affecting as Conor's ailing mum, Kebbell (*Warcraft*) is on great form as the father who's struggling to deal with giving his son some harsh truths, and Weaver is absolutely brilliant as the no-nonsense grandmother who wants Conor to come and live with her. All of these characters are seen through Conor's eyes, but Bayona finds a way to do this without sacrificing the realism at the heart of the story.

"Sigourney plays kind of a witch character for Conor, but at the same time she's Felicity Jones' mother in the film," explains Bayona. "So I remember that she always kept that ambiguity in her performance. If you think about Ripley, for example, she's a really tough woman, but at the same time she develops this kind of motherly thing in *Aliens*. So it was that feeling that was very attractive to me. You realise that she has that look, that kind of super-strong woman, but then you meet her and you meet this very sensitive woman.

"The first time I saw [Felicity] was in *Like Crazy*, and I was very impressed with her, and I think that she has again this strength and this vulnerability at the



The Monster forces Conor to face the thing that scares him the most.



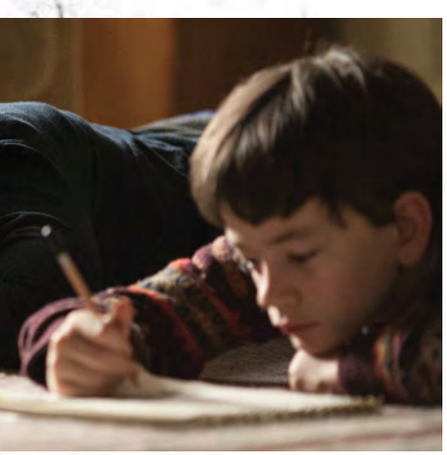
JA Bayona says that he can't thank Lewis MacDougall enough for his performance.



Felicity Jones' performance as Conor's mother will bring you to tears.



Liam Neeson got into the mo-cap suit to bring the Monster to life.



same time," she continues. "Toby Kebbell was the same, I had the best time working with him on set. And Liam Neeson wasn't my first choice; he was my only choice, because he's so good."

Indeed, Neeson is absolutely the perfect fit for the character of the monster, Conor's irascible and enigmatic spirit guide, who spins stories that don't fit the usual fairy-tale pattern, and who explains that life doesn't always have the ending that you'd expect. The veteran actor's gravelly tones fit the ancient tree beautifully, and he was on hand to provide motion capture, which Bayona tells us was vital in order for the character, and the film to be convincing.

"It was very interesting, because it was the first time that [our team] did motion capture. We've never done that before," he tells us. "When you do motion capture it's like experimental theatre; you don't have sets, you don't have costumes, and it feels very free. The only concern here was that we were portraying a 40-feet tall monster, so every single step or every single movement meant a massive destruction of the set, so we had to be very careful! But it was very interesting, and it was very impressive to work with Liam. Somehow he took the story in a very personal way, and there were moments while I was watching him play during the performance capture, even though we didn't have sets and we had costumes, of course, he's playing the monster, and you were able to see the tree. And when you see the tree in the film, I am able to see him. You can see the performance – it's so impressive what the animators and visual effects guys can do to bring the performance from Liam into the monster."

IN A LOT OF WAYS, A MONSTER CALLS IS THE PERFECT CHOICE FOR BAYONA. HE MADE A HELL OF A SPLASH WITH HIS SPANISH-LANGUAGE DEBUT HORROR THE *Orphanage*, a deeply moving ghost story about a mother grieving for her son, and showed that he could bring humanity to big-budget disaster with based-on-a-true-story awards magnet *The Impossible*. When we bring up the idea of a common theme, he tells us that he's noticed it too.

"I think it's an instinct thing," he explains. "You don't make a plan, you don't say, 'I'm going to do three films about these themes.' It's just about the fact that you're attracted to this idea, and suddenly you find the right material. And I like the idea that I've done three films so far, sharing these themes of loss, mother and sons and the idea of death, and telling the truth is a very important piece also in *A Monster Calls* and *The Impossible*. So at the end it's maybe a big canvas on the same themes from different POVs."

Bayona is moving onto something very different with the *Jurassic World* sequel, so if this is the end of a loose trilogy then he's finished it on a high note. It has provoked an incredibly emotional (there's that word again) response, with floods of tears accompanying every screening.

"Well, it's the reaction you have when you read the book, you know?" Bayona demurs. "It's a movie that somehow provokes a journey in the audience, and it's a very emotional journey, but at the same time you feel the relief when you get to the end, and for the director it's very rewarding. It's not just about the emotional aspect of it; it's the silence in the room when the movie's finished and you notice that a lot of people take the movie back home with them, which is very rewarding as a director."

A Monster Calls will be released in cinemas on 1 January.



Sigourney Weaver is brilliant as the tough Grandmother.

A HELPING HAND... OR PAW... OR HOOF

The finest fairy-tale spirit guides in cinema



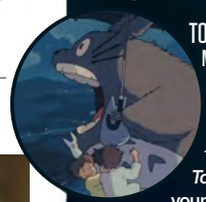
THE FAUN
PAN'S LABYRINTH (2006)
Life is hard for young Ofelia (Ivana Baquero) in Guillermo del Toro's masterpiece, but if she follows the instructions of the Faun (Doug Jones), she might just find her way to peace and happiness. Maybe.



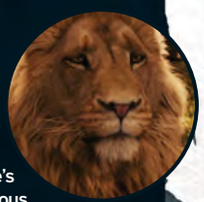
THE GOBLIN KING
LABYRINTH (1986)
Sarah (Jennifer Connolly) quite reasonably wishes away her baby brother, only to have the Goblin King (David Bowie) appear and take him. Is Jareth really the villain, though? Or is he the embodiment of her evolving fantasies and responsibilities?



JIMINY CRICKET
PINOCCHIO (1940)
They don't come much more helpful and well-intentioned than Jiminy Cricket. There is nothing complex about this little guy; he's just the conscience that we all have, the little voice in our ear telling us to do the right thing.



TOTORO
MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO (1988)
Underneath the wonderful fairy-tale fun of *My Neighbour Totoro* is a story of two young girls worrying about their sick mother. The forest spirits may not speak, but they're there to watch over their neighbours and keep them safe and happy. All aboard the cat bus!



ASLAN
THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE (2005)
As fairy tale guides go, Aslan has to be one of the biggest and best. He's majestic, he's righteous, and he is willing to sacrifice himself to remind our young heroes of what's important. He is also a giant furry Jesus metaphor, and also voiced by Liam Neeson.



Sigourney Weaver on Sci-Fi

WORDS
JULIDE TANRIVERDI

WE SPEAK TO THE GENRE LEGEND ABOUT A MONSTER CALLS, ALIEN 5, THE FUTURE OF AVATAR AND HOW SCI-FI CHANGED HER CAREER

SIGOURNEY WEAVER IS INSPECTING A PICTURE OF AN ACTION FIGURE OF ELLEN RIPLEY. "SHE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE ME", SHE CONCLUDES, "BUT I LOVE THAT THEY added Jonesy!" She has 75 acting credits to her name, but the *Alien* franchise made her a worldwide phenomenon.

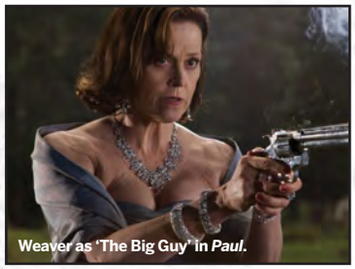
Weaver is in a particularly good mood during the interview in New York for *A Monster Calls*. She is very proud of this movie, and enjoyed working with Spanish director JA Bayona tremendously, who she calls an "extraordinary talent". This time she is not wielding a flamethrower, but playing a grandmother. We spoke to her about shooting in Spain, the next four *Avatar* movies and how Neill Blomkamp made her want to yet another *Alien* movie.

Watching *A Monster Calls*, you can't help but feel emotional. How was the experience shooting it?
It's a very powerful story. I think for all of us it was very personal. We had immense trust in our director and in each other. You're always in good hands when you're with a Spanish crew, because they kind of live in an emotional space and these big emotions seem to feel at home in Spain. We really all wanted to make this story come together so that it could go out into the world and help people come to terms with losing a parent or a daughter or your life.

It was certainly the focus, although we did a lot of research, each of us on the state of cancer and the treatment of cancer and what happens at the end when the treatments don't work. But ultimately the film is not about that at all. It is about love. It's just an extraordinary movie and it was an extraordinary book.

You have four *Avatar* movies coming up. What can you tell me about them?
[We're filming] *2* and *3* simultaneously, and then we'll take a break and do *4* and

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Weaver as 'The Big Guy' in *Paul*.

5. So we haven't started them yet. They are basically written and we need to go into pre-production and get them going I hope next year. I have a wonderful part. I can't tell you anything about it except that the scripts are so extraordinary. And as amazing as the first one was, I honestly feel these scripts are even better.

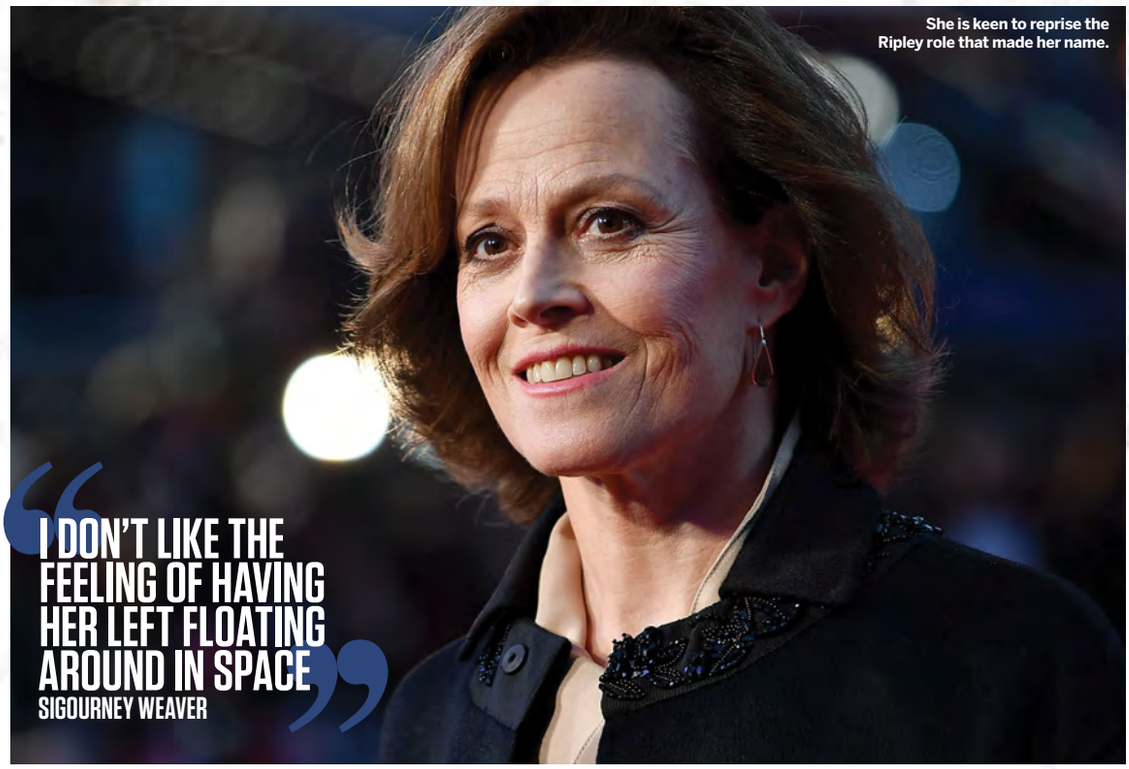
You have struck a chord with sci-fi fans. Are you surprised at this reaction?
[Laughs] Well, I don't know that it has too much to do with me, but I have been very fortunate playing some of these characters. I've done a lot of different kinds of movies, and a few of them have been in this space, but if it weren't for Comic-Con I would never meet fans. Comic-Con is such an extraordinary opportunity for actors, directors and writers to meet their audience, and I'm very grateful for that. People come up to you in the street, but when you're with Comic-Con fans and they bring their children and they've named them Ripley, it's a family affair. They're all wearing costumes, and it's very moving. I recommend to every actor to try to do at least one of these movies so they can go to a Comic-Con. It is not to be missed.



Why do you think sci-fi movies are closer to people's hearts?
The exploration, as Jim Cameron says, of what it is to be human, is very important. Because it's taking place in the future it's relevant. We don't know where we're going, and so I think that especially for young people with the kind of change and everything else that's happening, they do look at these movies and go, "What is the answer? How are we going to manage?" I think they are looking at these movies just as Lewis (MacDougall) looks at these drawings [in *A Monster Calls*] to try to make sense of a crazy world – a world in which you would like a superhero to come down and take Trump away.

You can relate to that as well?
I understand it. I guess the child in me understands it. I was never really into sci-fi when I was growing up, but I certainly was into books and fantasy and Robin Hood and Robinson Crusoe and all of these books, and to me it's all the same thing. We call it science fiction, which I think is not a term that gets a lot of respect. And I think it should, because it's really a genre that takes place in the future.

So depending on who you are, whether you're Neill Blomkamp, who's exploring a lot of different ideas about society and about creating a more fair society and about the role of AI in society – a lot of big questions – or whether you're doing a Marvel Comic book movie. So it doesn't surprise me that it's interesting to kids. I feel very lucky that I get to do one every now and then, because I feel like they are where it's happening now.


She is keen to reprise the Ripley role that made her name.

"I DON'T LIKE THE FEELING OF HAVING HER LEFT FLOATING AROUND IN SPACE"
SIGOURNEY WEAVER


No less than four *Avatar* sequels are currently in the works.

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You said two years ago you would do another *Alien* movie only if there was something intriguing and a good director. What was intriguing about Neill Blomkamp's approach to it that convinced you?
When we were working on *Chappie* in South Africa we started chatting about *Alien*, and he'd grown up watching those tapes. He just started talking to me about how the fans would love to see a movie that picks up after *Aliens*. The script that [director David] Fincher wrote never had a story for Newt and Hicks and Ripley. He said a lot of us would love to know what happened if *Aliens* just continued. And I said, "Well, that's very interesting." I've never even thought about that, and I said all I can tell you is I don't really like the feeling of having left her floating in space nonsensically around Earth after *Alien: Resurrection*.


Weaver has been unafraid to send herself up in films like *Galaxy Quest*.

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It's really hard to do a good sequel. I never felt that I had come across the right director or the right writer to finish the story. And when Neill started talking to me I went, "Oh my God, this is why we haven't done it, because I was waiting to meet him." So who knows? He's busy now with other things. They sort of put us on hold to let Ridley [Scott] do his *Prometheus* movie. I hope we get back to it. You never know in this business, but it certainly has been great fun working with Neill and seeing the script develop. It's a hell of a script. So I find that even if it's just a script I find it satisfying, because I know what happened to her.

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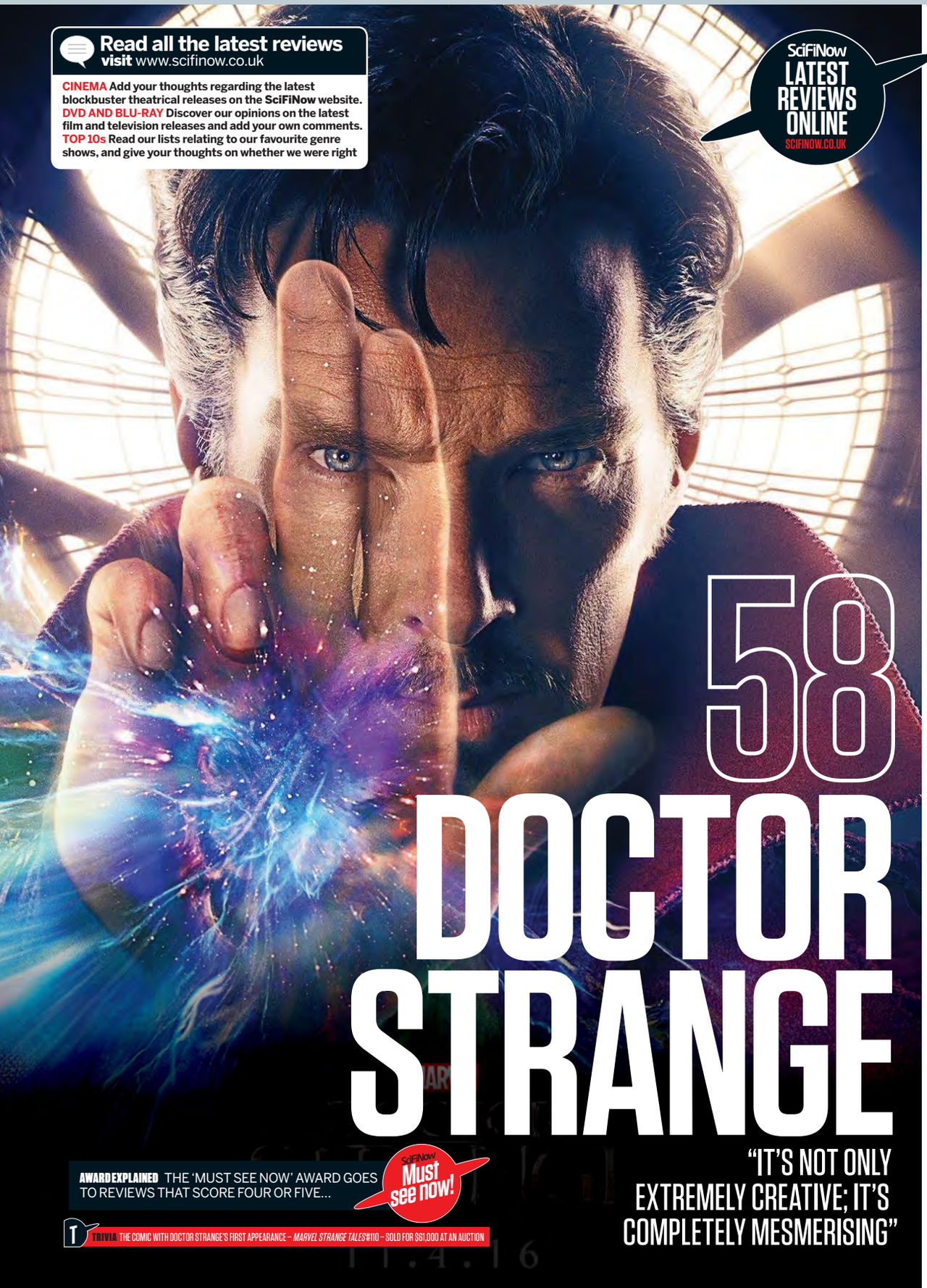
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58 DOCTOR STRANGE

"IT'S NOT ONLY EXTREMELY CREATIVE; IT'S COMPLETELY MESMERISING"

AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE FOUR OR FIVE...

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60 Rupture
61 The Wailing
61 We Are The Flesh

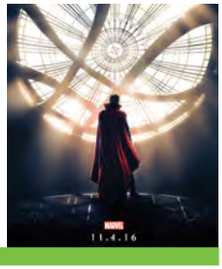
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FILM INFO

Released
Out now
Certificate
12A
Director
Scott Derrickson
Screenwriters
Jon Spaihts, Scott Derrickson, C Robert Cargill
Cast
Benedict Cumberbatch, Tilda Swinton, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Mads Mikkelsen, Rachel McAdams, Benedict Wong
Distributor
Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures
Running Time
115 mins



SciFiNow Must see now!

Magic man

DOCTOR STRANGE

Since the very first trailer, *Doctor Strange* has been made out to be very serious indeed; life-altering car wrecks, rehabilitation and powerful sorcery are no joking matter, after all. There's no room for jiggery-pokery and one-liners when there are things to overcome. But the reality of the film is actually very different.

After the opening scene involving The Ancient One (Tilda Swinton) and the evil Kaecilius (Mads Mikkelsen) battling vertically, horizontally and diagonally on the sides of buildings on the streets of London, we get our first look at Doctor Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch). Cue 'Shining Star' by Earth, Wind & Fire, and Strange bobbing along during brain surgery, trying to guess the title, artist and year of each track that technician Billy skips to in order to test Strange's mad music recognition skills. Serious, brooding Stephen Strange from the trailers is actually a doctor version of Tony Stark, with a cape instead of a metal supersuit and slightly less facial hair.

That might be down to the fact that the ever-brilliant Dan Harmon was called in to doctor the film's script and add a couple of jokes. His efforts definitely paid off; it's not as jam-packed as *Guardians Of The Galaxy* or *Ant-Man*, which both rely heavily on their strong but relentless senses of humour, but the gags rarely miss and they're not lame or misplaced. Obviously there's at least one joke confusing 'strange' as an adjective and 'Strange' as Strange's name, but for the most part the one-liners are just funny, and add some levity to dire situations.



In terms of placing *Doctor Strange* into the larger MCU, it's not the studio's best execution. However, it's a pretty great origin story and standalone film, and it's a textbook blockbuster superhero movie. It's big, loud and impressive, with an epic soundtrack and a solid cast.

But particular props have to go to the visual effects department, who have completely blown the film out of the water as far as the sorcery is concerned. Marvel is consistently great at bringing that universe to life through the likes of VFX battles, Iron Man's suit and Asgard, but it's taken to a new, fantastic level in *Doctor Strange*. The opening scene's battle gives us a look at what sorcery is to come, but as impressive as that scene is, the effects really don't show themselves off until Strange first visits the Astral Plane. They're not only extremely creative; they're completely mesmerising.

It's easy to keep going on about a film's incredible visual effects when there's not much else to comment on, but the case isn't the same for *Doctor Strange*. It has a strong story, good characters and an engaging script to get excited about. But ultimately, none of those things compare to the sorcery on display. It's basically art. Two hours of Strange being confused at the ins and outs of the Astral Plane would have been just as satisfying as the actual film. This is the new VFX bar to reach.



But like all Marvel projects, *Doctor Strange* does have some problems: Strange's colleague and love interest Christine Palmer (Rachel McAdams) is a bit of a nothing-character, not really there for anything besides extremely basic emotional support, and though he's a good fit for the doctor, Cumberbatch's American accent is patchy. But whatever. There's time to work on these things in *Doctor Strange 2*, *3* and probably *4*.

Poppy-Jay Palmer
FILM ★★★★★

MEN BE-SHAVING BADLY

The best beards of the genre movie world



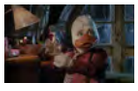
Prince Vulton (Flash Gordon)
Brian Blessed's mighty follicles have been blessing TV screens for decades, with some of their best, bushiest work being featured in *Flash Gordon* in 1980.

Tony Stark (Iron Man)
No list of great film beards could ever be complete without Iron Man's immaculately sculpted lower face. Even greater is its consistency, as it's been going strong for eight years.

RJ MacReady (The Thing)
MacReady's beard was both practical, keeping him warm in the harsh, snowy weather of the Antarctic, and aesthetically pleasing, being impressively thick and well kept.

Seneca Crane (The Hunger Games)
If you ask your friends, family and strangers on the street what the best part of *The Hunger Games* series is, 90 per cent of them will say Wes Bentley's facial hair.

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Howard The Duck
Get to grips with another of Marvel's lesser known heroes, Howard the Duck, with this underrated gem/total disaster.

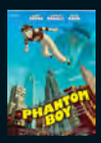
TRIVIA MORGAN FREEMAN, KEN WANATABE AND BILL NIGHY WERE ALL CONSIDERED FOR THE ROLE OF THE ANCIENT ONE BEFORE TILDA SWINTON WAS CAST.



PHANTOM BOY

Floaty and moving animation

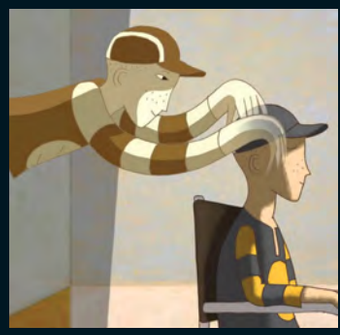
Details PG // 84 mins // Out now **Directors** Jean-Loup Felicioli, Alain Gagnol **Screenwriter** Alain Gagnol **Cast** Jared Padalecki, Fred Armisen, Vincent D'Onofrio, Melissa Disney **Distributor** Soda



A stylish Saul Bass-inspired title sequence opens up this slinky cartoon about a sick young boy who, when asleep in hospital, is able to leave his body and invisibly roam about. The European-helmed film is set in New York City, where an evil Forties-type gangster is attempting to bring terror to its inhabitants. Luckily, Phantom Boy – or Leo, as he's known to his family – is on hand to help wheelchair-bound detective Alex solve the case.

The animation bursts with elegant visual flourishes that are at times hauntingly beautiful and at others jam-packed with energy. When Leo whooshes over the city to help Alex, or journalist Mary captures a villain with a face that resembles a Picasso painting, the screen instantly jumps to life. The backdrops are also intricately designed, featuring detailed Times Square signs and a cosy hospital playroom filled with inviting toys. When the jigsaw faced-villain (voiced by Vincent D'Onofrio) is revealing his plan, the animation switches to that of a pixelated arcade game configuration.

Though the narrative follows a standard beat, it is enjoyably told and features many amusing characters. Particularly enticing for younger viewers is a tiny, scruffy, vicious dog, who gets a brilliant redemptive arc.



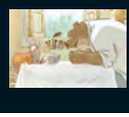
Leo's sickness and the impact it has on his family is sensitively handled in a fantastic sequence where he follows his mother out of the hospital to witness the pain and tears she has been hiding from him. While Leo disappears as an undercover detective and superhero of sorts, the film doesn't forego the human drama, making it an appealing blend of noir and compassion with a good sense of humour.

Directors Jean-Loup Felicioli and Alain Gagnol excelled with their debut feature *A Cat In Paris*, and though this is a lovely addition to their artistic brand of storytelling, it doesn't quite match the heights of their previous endeavour.

Katherine McLaughlin

FILM ★★★★☆

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Ernest & Celestine
A warming animation about a bear and a mouse whose friendship is questioned by their communities.



TROLLS

Not just cupcakes and rainbows

SciFiNow Must see now!

Details U // 92 mins // Out now **Directors** Walt Dohrn, Mike Mitchell **Screenwriters** Jonathan Aibel, Glenn Berger **Cast** Anna Kendrick, Justin Timberlake, Zooey Deschanel, James Corden **Distributor** 20th Century Fox



We live in a time when studios turn out movies based on any zeitgeisty craze to make the big bucks regardless of whether it's a good idea or not (*Emojimovie*, anyone?). This year, we see the revival of *Trolls*, the ugly, punk-haired toy that adorned pencils and pockets in the early Nineties, but their debut on the big screen is courtesy of the creators of *Shrek*, which bodes well, and thankfully the result is a vibrant, fun and cheeky movie that even big kids should enjoy.

The story is a classic rescue mission with our two heroes, the ebullient Princess Poppy (Anna Kendrick) and the sullen Branch (Justin Timberlake), setting off to Bergen Town to save their friends from its ogre-like inhabitants, who think that the only way to be happy is to eat the little critters. Along the way they encounter singing plants, carnivorous creatures and floating eyeballs in a colourful, nightmarish place that could be twinned with Tim-Burton-ville or the animated Wonderland. Trolls fart glitter, crap cupcakes and burst into scenario-appropriate song – with Timberlake displaying his eclectic tastes as executive music producer.



Yet even though there's oodles of glitter, singing, hugging and scrapbooking, don't dismiss this as saccharin kiddie fare; directors Walt Dohrn and Mike Mitchell – whose resumes include *SpongeBob SquarePants* – have admitted to drawing on the humour of *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* and *The Mighty Boosh*, so there's enough wit and surrealism to keep older folk entertained too.

The animation itself is impressively detailed, giving a lo-fi, tactile look to the characters, in keeping with the original toys, while the song choices and vocal performances (especially Zooey Deschanel's rendition of 'Hello') will tug you in all the right directions in spite of yourself. As Branch says, "Life isn't all cupcakes and rainbows," but *Trolls* might just change your mind, if only for 92 multi-coloured minutes.

Nadia Attia

FILM ★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Inside Out
For all the feels, plus some smart jokes for the adults, check out this 2015 Pixar hit.

TRIVIA THE FIRST TROLL TOY WAS CREATED IN GJØL, DENMARK IN 1958.

SciFiNow Must see now!



I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER

It's good to stalk

Details 18 // 104 mins // 9 December **Director** Billy O'Brien **Screenwriters** Christopher Hyde, Billy O'Brien **Cast** Max Records, Christopher Lloyd, Laura Fraser, Karl Geary, Christina Baldwin **Distributor** Bulldog Distribution

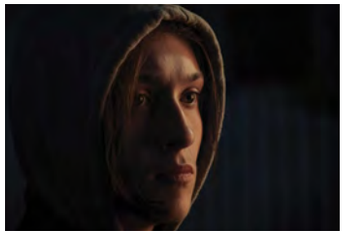


The first thing that hits you in this adaptation of Dan Wells' novel is the atmosphere. Dark, cold and rich, this is a wonderful slice of small-town gothic that has some real surprises up its sleeve.

John Wayne Cleaver (Max Records) is a difficult teenager. Diagnosed as sociopathic by his therapist (Karl Geary), he spends his time in school trying not to hurt the kids who bully him and helping his mum (Laura Fraser) and aunt (Christina Baldwin) in their basement mortuary at night.

When the bodies coming in start to look like the work of a serial killer, John quickly latches onto his amiable elderly neighbour Crowley (Christopher Lloyd) as a potential suspect. Are his suspicions justified?

With a film like this, it's so important to get the lead character right, and *I Am Not A Serial Killer* boasts an absolutely superb turn from Records (*Where The Wild Things Are*). The blend of John's fascination and fear is compelling, and Records finds both the humour in his lack of empathy and the humanity in his struggle to avoid what could very well be his destiny.



The snow-bound town is the perfect setting for this story: families fighting to maintain normality, a minimal law enforcement presence, and no real possibility of escape. With dead bodies in the basement and a panda-balaclava-sporting, possible-killer, definite-stalker antihero, it's leaning into the horror genre even before the plot really kicks in. But the story is firmly planted in reality, giving it a real emotional heft, helped by cinematographer Robbie Ryan (*Slow West*) and excellent supporting performances (Fraser is particularly good).

And then there's Lloyd as the friendly old-timer across the road. It's hard to say much about his performance without spoiling anything, but it represents some of his best work in years.

The pacing and subject matter may alienate some viewers, but this is the kind of film that deserves to find a cult audience. It's a chilling and sensitive horror that you won't forget in a hurry.

Jonathan Hatfull

FILM ★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Let The Right One In
A troubled young boy finds his inner strength with the help of a vampire in Tomas Alfredson's modern classic.



RUPTURE

The girl who played with spiders

Details 15 // 102 mins // Out now **Director** Steven Shainberg **Screenwriters** Steven Shainberg, Brian Nelson **Cast** Noomi Rapace, Peter Stormare, Lesley Manville, Michael Chiklis **Distributor** Signature Entertainment



Noomi Rapace turns in an impressive physical performance as Renee, a woman snatched away from her home life and teen son by a mysterious group of people. She is taken to a compound where she is forced to face her greatest fear, but instead of being subjected to the usual torture-porn scenarios, a smart screenplay by Steven Shainberg and Brian Nelson cannily subverts the usual tropes.

Though things get off to a slightly uneven start with a clumsy revelation that Renee suffers from arachnophobia, but *Rupture* is worth persevering with as it turns into a tense, claustrophobic and strange experience. Stuffed in the back of a truck by two men, you fear the worst for Renee, but instead a new character appears in the form of a woman who goes by the name of Nyman. The film allows you to relax for a minute before once again forcing you to bite your nails in anticipation as Nyman shackles Renee by her foot and slowly removes her jeans.

Lesley Manville as Nyman is a sinister and disturbing presence who doesn't reveal any emotion as she moves her hostage around. At times you may wish the film was purely these two interacting with one another thanks to the entertaining nature of their performances.

On arrival at her prison, Renee is harnessed to a gurney and left to sweat it out. She's given vague clues as to why she is there, but nothing is revealed until later on. There are hints of Pascal Laugier's *Martyrs* behind some of the smart ideas broached in the film regarding enlightenment, but instead of severe beatings, Renee has spiders forced onto her. A particularly wince-inducing moment involves a helmet where the arthropods crawl all over her face. In between her torture sessions, Renee unshackles herself to secretly wander the clinical compound, which unfortunately reduces the intoxicating ambience.

Considering Brian Nelson penned *Hard Candy* and Steven Shainberg directed *Secretary*, you may be expecting something more nerve shredding or packed full of emotional heft. However, this effort feels a little tame in comparison to their previous endeavours.

Katherine McLaughlin

FILM ★★★☆☆

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Cube
Vincenzo Natali's cult sci-fi thriller is a maze packed full of interesting ideas and crazy characters.

TRIVIA *I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER* IS THE FIRST BOOK IN DAN WELLS' SERIES OF NOVELS, THE FIFTH OF WHICH WAS RELEASED THIS YEAR.



SciFiNow Must see now!

THE WAILING

A town called panic

Details 15 //156 mins // Out now **Director** Hong-jin Na **Screenwriter** Hong-jin Na
Cast Kwak Do-won, Jun Kunimura, Woo-hee Chun, Jung-min Hwang
Distributor Kaleidoscope Entertainment



Korean filmmaker Na Hong-jin follows nail-biting thriller *The Chaser* and sprawling epic *The Yellow Sea* with this excellent supernatural horror, which sees the director approach this new territory with the same grit, realism and clumsy violence with tremendous results.

A small town in the Korean mountains is rocked by a string of brutal murders, and the local police are at a loss. The shaky explanation given by the authorities is that the attackers are out of their minds on mushrooms, but the locals point the finger at a Japanese stranger (Jun Kunimura) who lives in the woods outside of town and may be a demon. When the young daughter of officer Jong-Goo (Kwak Do-won) seems to fall under his spell, he will do whatever it takes to put a stop to the deepening insanity.

Although *The Chaser* had strong horror elements, *The Wailing* feels like something new for Na, but it clearly bears his authorial stamp. The two and a half hour running time may seem like a tall order for a horror movie, and it is a little overlong, but it's less concerned with jump scares and more with whipping this small town into a hysterical frenzy.

With its mostly well-intentioned but ultimately ineffectual rural heroes, it recalls *Memories Of Murder*, and Kwak is superb as the boozy, back pain-ridden hero who is confronted with gore-drenched crime scenes, shamanic rituals and a possibly possessed daughter. There's humour, but it comes from recognisable humanity, watching people react to things they can't understand.

The plotting does become convoluted and nonsensical, but the confusion for Jong-Goo and the viewer is clearly deliberate. With epic cinematography, some very effective sudden shocks and a powerful blend of detective story, occult horror and Stephen King-esque small-town suspicion, this is another superb film from Na Hong-jin.

Jonathan Hatfull

FILM ★★★★★



OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



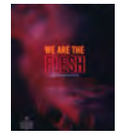
The Chaser
Na Hong-jin's debut feature is a brilliant chase between a cop and a serial killer.



WE ARE THE FLESH

The body politic

Details 18 // 79 mins // 18 November **Director** Emiliano Rocha Minter
Screenwriter Emiliano Rocha Minter **Cast** Noé Hernández, María Evoli, Diego Gamaliel
Distributor Arrow Films



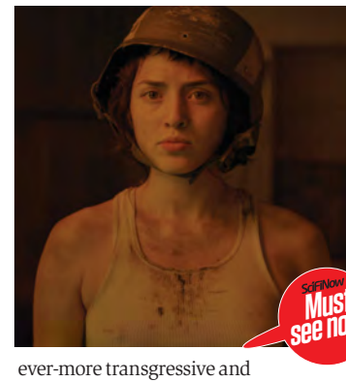
It's always impressive when a film manages to immerse the viewer in the world it's presenting. In the case of *We Are The Flesh*, it's not necessarily a pleasant experience, but good lord, it is powerful. First-time director Emiliano Rocha Minter has crafted a film that is truly nightmarish and hypnotic; a grimy and potent vision of a hell that might be closer than you think.

In a post-apocalyptic Mexico, a lone scavenger (Noé Hernández) has made a home for himself in a cardboard-lined ruin, but his routine is interrupted by the arrival of a young brother and sister (Diego Gamaliel and María Evoli). He gladly takes these teenagers in, but he's not interested in protecting them.

What begins is a gruelling journey towards perversion and madness, as the man starts bullying his new guests into sleeping with each other, a prospect that at least one of them apparently does not find that unappealing. The provocation isn't merely suggestive; it's backed up by graphic depictions of incest, cannibalism and rape that consciously recall the work of Gaspar Noé.

What really impresses is Minter's skill. He creates a claustrophobic and womb-like setting, a primal furnace where there is no moral judgement, possibility of intervention or rules about life and death.

These unbound characters wander this sweaty otherworld, committing ever-more transgressive and unspeakable deeds with ferocious energy and, in the case of the man, something approaching rapture.



SciFiNow Must see now!

There's also a sharp political element, which becomes ever more important as the film progresses and new arrivals find their way into this world. The performances are excellent, with the late Hernández in particular standing out with a truly unforgettable turn.

It's so clearly not for everyone that it seems redundant to point that out, but this is a hugely impressive blend of provocation and cinematic skill. You may not enjoy your time with *We Are The Flesh*, but you will not be able to look away, or forget it. And you might need a shower afterwards.

Jonathan Hatfull

FILM ★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Enter The Void
Take a psychedelic trip through life after death with master provocateur Gaspar Noé.

TRIVIA *WE ARE THE FLESH* HIT THE FILM FESTIVAL CIRCUIT WITH ENDORSEMENTS FROM THE LIKES OF ALFONSO CUARÓN AND ALEJANDRO GONZÁLEZ IÑÁRRITU.

STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Expanded universe

Details 12 // 135 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now
Director JJ Abrams **Cast** Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Adam Driver, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Oscar Isaac **Distributor** Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment



This Collector's edition arrives in time for the holidays with new featurettes, commentary and deleted scenes. Since you'll have likely watched *The Force Awakens* to death by now, we'll concentrate on the bonus features.

First up, the sole commentary track from JJ Abrams proves to be as enlightening as you'd expect from a man who has to rank among 21st century cinema's most pivotal individuals. From delving into the psychology of the characters in scenes like Han Solo and Kylo Ren's fateful last meeting and the climatic lightsaber battle, to interesting bits of trivia (*Selma* director Ava DuVernay suggested certain rewrites, and it seems like most of Abrams' friends and family had cameos), a lot is packed in.

On the featurette side, plenty more overlooked areas of filming are covered. In 'Foley: A Sonic Tale', the methodology of the film's sound effects are discussed, and 'Sounds Of The Resistance' takes us back to Skywalker Sound, emphasising the importance of replicating the saga's classic noises, from Chewbacca's roar to the hum of the lightsaber.

'Dressing The Galaxy' makes the point that in any other film, a *Star Wars* extra would probably be the most iconic character, such is the excellence of designer Michael Kaplan, and 'Inside The Armory' talks us through the film's various weapons, with special attention paid to the replication of Anakin Skywalker's lightsaber. Best of all is 'The Scavenger And The Stormtrooper', an extended back-and-forth between Daisy Ridley and John Boyega, culminating in an epic freestyle rap and dance number.



One of the surprise revelations to come out of it is just how many of the film's better moments (Poe's bantering, the bloody handprint on the Stormtrooper helmet, Finn and Rey's first meeting) were actually the product of reshoots. It should provide reassurance for those troubled by the much-publicised changes that *Rogue One* has gone through.

Even though there's still not quite as much as we'd hoped for, this is still strong in the Force. Go buy it, you should.

Steve Wright
FILM ★★★★★ **EXTRAS** ★★★★½

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



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TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Dimension yes

Details 12 // 112 mins // 2016 // Blu-ray • DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Dave Green
Cast Megan Fox, Stephen Amell, Will Arnett, Noel Fisher, Jeremy Howard, Pete Ploszek, Alan Ritchson **Distributor** Paramount Home Entertainment



We've always snickered at the words 'critic proof' – we'll be the judges of that one – but having seen *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out Of The Shadows*, we may well have to reconfigure our stance.

Corny as hell and utterly unabashed by the fact, this banishes the memory of the inconsistent original by purely being a hell of a lot of fun. Here, fan service is fully unleashed in the form of Rocksteady, Bebob, Krang and Casey Jones (Stephen Amell makes an incredible amount of sense in the role) – if you're a *Turtles* fan then it'll be everything you could have unreasonably hoped for.



Sure, the action skips around from one landmark to another for little or no reason, the oh-so-serious subplot over whether the turtles want to be human sticks out like a sore thumb, and the city-destroying action doesn't always feel like a good fit, but it's hard to be down on something that's so earnest in its desire to just have a good time.

Steve Wright
FILM ★★★½★

THE BFG Dream weaver

Details PG // 117 mins // 2016 // Blu-ray DVD // **Released** 21 November **Director** Steven Spielberg **Cast** Mark Rylance, Ruby Barnhill, Bill Hader, Penelope Wilton, Rebecca Hall **Distributor** E1 Entertainment



Disney's remake of *The BFG* seems to be for people who both loved the animated 1989 feature as a child, a parent or just a casual viewer, and last watched it so long ago that they can't really remember anything that happened in it. For many, this new version will make your love for the original come rushing back.

Sophie, an orphaned girl from London, is kidnapped by a giant one night during the witching hour (also known as 3am) after the giant in question fears she'll tell someone of his species' existence. In an attempt to keep the secret, he takes her back to Giant Country and keeps her in a hollowed-out tree in the middle of his cottage. The two become fast friends, before embarking on a number of magical and bewildering adventures.



What makes *The BFG* especially special is the marvellous relationship between the two leads and their wonderful chemistry. More specifically, newcomer Ruby Barnhill is an absolute joy to watch as Sophie, and an example of some of Disney's finest live-action casting.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

★★★★★

X-MEN: APOCALYPSE The end is nigh

Details 12 // 144 mins // 2016 // Blu-ray DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Bryan Singer **Cast** James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence, Oscar Isaac, Rose Byrne **Distributor** 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment



The mutants are back and as misunderstood as ever in the third instalment of the *X-Men* prequel trilogy, but this time they're taking on the most powerful mutant of them all: Apocalypse (Oscar Isaac), an ancient mutant thought to be the world's first. Wanting to cleanse the planet of imperfection, Apocalypse



sets off on a mission to recruit some gifted youngsters to help him out.

The film's subtitle would suggest that this one is a lot bigger and grander than the others in the series, but it's really not. The threat levels are high as always, but not so high that you feel the need to scoot to the edge of your seat. That might have something to do with Apocalypse himself and the fact that here, he's just not that great a villain. With the usually brilliant Isaac in the role, there's so much more that could have been done with him.

However, the film is still action-packed and often entertaining, with the standout scene easily being a new Quicksilver-in-slow-motion masterpiece set to 'Sweet Dreams' by Eurythmics.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

★★★★★

MINDGAME SAGA

Two aliens and a human walk into a bar...

Details PG // 90 mins // 1997 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Keith Barnfather **Cast** Sophie Aldred, Miles Richardson **Distributor** Reeltime Pictues



One of the various unofficial spin-offs to be filmed during the *Doctor Who* 1989-2005 'wilderness years', *Mindgame Saga* is essentially the show in all but name, minus its lead.

Commencing with the 30-minute short film *Mindgame*, it sees a Sontaran, Commander Sarg (Toby Aspin), a Draconian (Miles Richardson) and a human (Sophie Aldred) imprisoned together by a mysterious alien. Essentially comprising them bickering, coming to terms with their predicament and discussing each species' philosophies before grudgingly deciding to work together, it's very much a filler *Doctor Who* episode, replete with poor-quality prosthetics (you can see Aspin's lips moving beneath the mask), but would undoubtedly have been well received at the time. Today, it is simply an interesting curio: a peep at a time when this was the closest thing to *Who* that people could reasonably hope for.

Also included in this set is the *Mindgame Trilogy*, consisting of three segments following the three characters in separate stories, with each reflecting on how the encounter changed them. First up, 'Battlefield' (penned by legendary *Who* producer Terrance Dicks) sees a mortally wounded Sarg go through a similar experience, reminiscing about the earlier short, initially regretting his actions before going on to question his race's entire outlook, wondering whether co-operation is indeed the best policy ("It would be... glorious!"). Working well as a curtailed insight into one of the Doctor's most memorable foes, the gut-wrenching yet not unexpected ending makes this the best of the bunch.

Sadly, the rest of the volume isn't up to the same standard. 'Prisoner 451' is nothing short of an ordeal, seeing the condemned Draconian sitting around alternately bemoaning his fate and mangling Shakespeare, while 'Scout Ship' is a tad more affecting – mainly due to the always welcome presence of Aldred – but still ultimately unsubstantial.



It's probably best recommended for old *Who* completists, but those of a later age will still probably get something out of this, even if it's just a reminder of what used to be.

Steve Wright

★★★★★





IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Downtime
The Brigadier is forced to face the evil alien entity known as the Great Intelligence – and there's no Doctor to help him.

TRIVIA *MINDGAME SAGA* WAS ALLOWED TO BE MADE BECAUSE OF A CONTRACT LOOPHOLE ALLOWING PRODUCTION COMPANIES TO LICENSE CHARACTERS FROM THEIR CREATORS.

I AM THE PRETTY THING THAT LIVES IN THE HOUSE

Cold comforts

Details 15 // 85 mins // 2016 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Osgood Perkins **Screenwriter** Osgood Perkins **Cast** Ruth Wilson, Paula Prentiss, Bob Balaban, Lucy Boynton **Distributor** Netflix



I Am The *Pretty Thing That Lives In The House* has arrived on Netflix. It stars Ruth Wilson (*Luther*) as Lily, a live-in carer who looks after the ailing Iris Blum (Paula Prentiss), a famous horror author. Lily is too anxious to read her work – until she begins to think that she may not be alone in the house…

Many will put off by the film's glacial pacing and chilly mood. If you thought that Ti West's *The Innkeepers* was overly mannered and needed to get a move on then this is almost certainly not you.

However, patient viewers are for the most part rewarded with an atmospheric chiller. Perkins and cinematographer Julie Kirkwood create a powerful sense of cold and unease from the first frames, as Lily anxiously inches around the house, terrified of the growing patch of mould downstairs and the secrets hidden in the pages of Blum's novel.

Wilson's brilliant leading turn is crucial, and this is something very different for her; a softly spoken and jittery woman who is seemingly always on the verge of a nervous break. Her whispering voice-over becomes part of the film's soundtrack, ushering us through the film and adding another layer of vintage horror shivers.

However, the flashbacks feel like an unnecessary addition to bulk the film out. Meanwhile, Lily is so thinly fleshed out that it seems to be a conscious choice, but it does distance the viewer, possibly pushing those struggling to connect with the lack of momentum and warmth.

It's a difficult film to love then, but it is beautifully made and boasts a superb central performance. There are wonderful chills to be found in the chilliness.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★☆☆





IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Haunting

Osgood Perkins lovingly rips pages out of Shirley Jackson's work, and this is the best film adaptation.

THE NEON DEMON

It's called fashion

Details 18 // 117 mins // 2016 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Nicolas Winding Refn **Cast** Elle Fanning, Jena Malone, Bella Heathcote, Abbey Lee, Karl Glusman, Christina Hendricks, Keanu Reeves **Distributor** Icon



For a film as obsessed with aesthetics and looking slick as this one, *The Neon Demon* has quite a pleasing amount of plot to get through, which is about as specialised and peculiar as you can get.

The film tells the story of 16-year-old aspiring model Jesse and her shot at stardom in the shiny, neon-lit world of LA. Being beautiful, extremely talented and driven to no end means that Jesse obviously has to have some obstacles thrown at her on the tricky road to success. Said obstacles are what make *The Neon Demon* unlike anything else, and come in the form of cannibalism, necrophilia, mountain lions and then some.

Even without sound and context, Nicolas Winding Refn's first proper venture into horror is a treat;



everything on screen is carefully considered, mesmerising and impossibly beautiful. But obviously it's better to watch a film with context and the sound turned on; you'll need them for when *The Neon Demon* effortlessly pulls you in with each new and horrific twist.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

★★★★☆

THE BURNING

Sheers terror

Details 18 // 91 mins // 1981 // BD • DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Tony Maylam **Cast** Brian Matthews, Leah Ayres, Brian Backer, Jason Alexander **Distributor** Arrow Video



Hardcore slasher fans have been waiting for Arrow Video's Blu-ray release of video nasty *The Burning* for so long that they may have given up hope of ever seeing the raft massacre in pristine HD, but it's finally here.

For newcomers, it's pretty similar to *Friday The 13th*, as a group of campers come under attack from burned-up bogeyman Cropsey and his garden shears. That being said, if you've not seen the film before, you may wonder what all the fuss is about, as nostalgia is one of *The Burning*'s strongest assets. It takes a long time to get going, but luckily there's plenty of star-spotting to be done, with young Jason Alexander, Fisher Stevens and Holly Hunter popping up as the doomed campers.

The real reasons to pick this up on Blu-ray are the incredible effects work from Tom Savini, who sends the blood and severed fingers flying with inventive glee. Director Tony Maylam does stage some effective shocks, and there's a great score from Rick Wakeman. It's an enjoyable schlock fest, if not the classic it's sometimes hailed as.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★☆☆



TRIVIA BLONDIE'S DEBBIE HARRY WAS REPORTEDLY ATTACHED TO PLAY IRIS BLUM IN *I AM THE PRETTY THING THAT LIVES IN THE HOUSE.*

GHOSTBUSTERS We need to talk about Holtzmann

Details 12 // 116 mins // 2016 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** 21 November **Director** Paul Feig
Cast Kristen Wiig, Melissa McCarthy, Kate McKinnon, Leslie Jones, Chris Hemsworth
Distributor Sony Pictures Home Entertainmentt



So after all that noise, it turns out that the new *Ghostbusters* was great.

The script by Paul Feig and Katie Dippold was funny, sharp and warm, it showcased Feig's most impressive visuals yet, and most importantly it gave us a truly awesome and hilarious team in Kristen Wiig, Melissa McCarthy, Kate McKinnon and Leslie Jones. These four are the biggest reason for its appeal, and we would be truly sad if the box-office performance meant that we wouldn't get to see more of them.

The plot, which focuses on a rising tide of ghouls powered by a bitter, lonely man (Neil Casey) does feel like a swift kick in the nuts of the haters, but it's really the relationships between the four leads



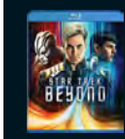
that give *Ghostbusters* its laughs and its heart. If you've not seen it by now, we can't say enough great things about McKinnon's instantly iconic Holtzmann, and if you have seen it you'll know exactly what we're talking about.

It's nice to see cameos from the old gang, but they're not needed. This new bunch can handle it on their own.

Jonathan Hatfull
FILM ★★★★★

STAR TREK BEYOND Trek Classic

Details 12 // 122 mins // 2016 // Blu-ray DVD // **Released** 21 November **Director** Justin Lin
Cast Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Karl Urban, Idris Elba, Simon Pegg, Sofia Boutella, Zoe Saldana, Anton Yelchin, John Cho **Distributor** Paramount



After the self-conscious grittiness and endless self-referencing of *Star Trek Into Darkness*, it's a great relief to see the third film in *Trek*'s reboot series going back to what it does so well: focusing on the ensemble cast and finding the balance between pleasing the faithful and showing what a bigger budget can do. Writers Simon Pegg and Doug Jung deliver a story



that feels like a massive episode of classic *Trek* in the best way, and director Justin Lin delivers a blend of visual fireworks and heart that works very well indeed.

Kirk (Chris Pine) and the Enterprise crew are mid five-year mission when they answer a distress call from a remote planet, which of course is a trap. With the ship destroyed and the team scattered, can they stop the vengeful Krall (Idris Elba)?

Lin excels during the action sequences (the Enterprise attack is stunning), but he knows when to sit back and let his cast do their thing, and Sofia Boutella nearly steals the whole film as rebellious Jaylah. Ignore the box-office: this is one of the best films of the summer.

Jonathan Hatfull
FILM ★★★★★

ELSTREE 1976 Extra time

Details 12 // 97 mins // 2016 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Jon Spira **Cast** Jeremy Bulloch, Garrick Hagon, David Prowse, Paul Blake, Pam Rose **Distributor** Soda



"How many actors can say that they have their own action figures?"

It's a boast that even some of Hollywood's biggest stars can't lay claim to – unlike the likes of Paul Blake, Pam Rose, Garrick Hagon and Anthony Forrest, all of who share the distinction of playing characters in *Star Wars*.

As you might expect, some of the most memorable moments in this documentary are more anecdotal in nature. Derek Lyons (who played one of the Rebels stationed on Yavin IV) recalls how friendly and approachable Mark Hamill was; Paul Blake (aka the ill-fated Greedo) relays George Lucas's directorial advice to "Play it like they do in the movies"), and David Prowse (the body of Darth Vader) has an amusing anecdote regarding standing up to Stanley Kubrick on *A Clockwork Orange*.

Yet it's the moments where they touch upon their lives outside the *Star Wars* bubble that are the most affecting. Since most of them never reached the same acting heights as the illustrious leads, it's easy forget that for a lot of them – notably Rose, as she was uncredited as Leesub Sirin and went on to remain so for roles in *Superman* and *Batman* among others – it was just another phase in their lives, albeit a memorable one. For others, it was vastly more significant, with the saga's continuing survival via fan conventions providing them with much-needed validation at difficult times in their lives.

Even for the actors who had their roles reduced, there is a refreshing lack of bitterness. Take Anthony Forrest, whose scene as Luke's friend Fixer on Tatooine was cut, although he survived as the Stormtrooper who gets mind-tricked by Obi-Wan Kenobi in Mos Eisley, and Garrick Hagon, who is disappointed but philosophical about seeing Biggs Darklighter's most important scene nixed.

Finally, you have Blake again, self-deprecatingly bemoaning that despite being a Shakespearean-trained actor, his tombstone will bear the moniker 'Here lies Greedo'. While we think that's pretty cool, we can understand.



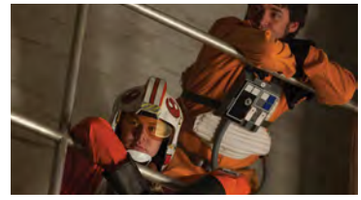
As intriguing and insightful as it is, this documentary is undoubtedly one for the most dedicated fans. If anything, it speaks highly about the inner life of a film that can inspire such a niche yet charming production as this one.

Steve Wright
FILM ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Jedi Junkies
Casts an eye over some of the more zany sections of *Star Wars* fandom.





TRIVIA *ELSTREE 1976* DIRECTOR JON SPIRA USED CROWD FUNDING TO LAUNCH THE DOCUMENTARY.

Z FOR ZACHARIAH

Apocalypse been and gone

Details 15 // 98 mins // 2015 // NETFLIX // **Released** Out now **Director** Craig Zobel
Cast Margot Robbie, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Chris Pine **Distributor** Netflix



Oddly overlooked for a UK theatrical release despite its excellent cast, post-apocalyptic drama *Z For Zachariah* has found a home on Netflix – but is it worth the wait?

As it progresses, it becomes clear that this isn't the film you were expecting: rather than the three-pronged survival tale that inevitably turns nasty that the trailers were promising, this instead turns out to be a more contemplative affair, with leads Anne Burden (Margot Robbie) and John Loomis (Chiwetel Ejiofor) attempting to stave off cabin fever, all the while the sudden entrance into their lives of mysterious stranger Caleb (Chris Pine) makes the situation even more complicated.

As it turns out, there's no end game in sight for the characters: their only real aim is to construct a device that will allow them to make contact with people beyond their isolated valley, now one of the few safe havens from the rest of the world, which because of some unknown calamity has become suffused with radiation. In this sense it resembles more accomplished end-of-dayers like *The Road* and *A Boy And His Dog*, although the outlook here is infinitely more hopeful. While these tales saw mankind submit to its darker impulses, the question of whether it will do so here lingers longer.

Then again, the film's lack of urgency isn't always a good thing. While





it's all atmospheric enough and the performances are uniformly great, it's hard to discern what point it's trying to make. Or perhaps there isn't one; maybe it's just about mankind's capacity to stubbornly live on in spite of increasingly dire circumstances, but until the end, there don't really seem to be any stakes beyond the characters avoiding boredom and the reality of growing old in this kind of world. Bearing this in mind, its lack of availability to a wider audience becomes clearer.

While this is a competent entry into the canon of post-apocalyptic cinema, it won't stand out as one of the more memorable examples of the genre. In a world full of post-apocalypse dystopias, you may be able to give this one a miss.

Steve Wright

FILM ★★★☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Survivalist
People take drastic action to survive in this dark post-apocalyptic thriller.

INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE

Fading silently into the night

Details 12 // 120 mins // 2016 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Roland Emmerich **Cast** Jeff Goldblum, Liam Hemsworth, Jesse T Usher, Maika Monroe, Bill Pullman **Distributor** 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment



Cinema is firmly in the grip of its current mania for nostalgia. At its best, this trend can represent a welcome dose of light-frills fun. At its worse, it makes you question whether the original film was ever actually any good in the first place.

Independence Day: Resurgence straddles the line with microscopic precision. While there's a bit to like about it (mainly the return of old guard-ers Jeff Goldblum and Bill Pullman), ultimately it never quite does enough to justify its own existence. Instead, the aim here seems to be to kick-start a whole new franchise while forgetting to make something that stands on its own two feet as something interesting and exciting.



For every tweak of the original formula, there are a couple more obvious flaws: the new younger characters aren't given all that much setup, and bizarre narrative decisions (notably an almost wholly unnecessary underwater subplot) detract from a story that is functional rather than purposeful.

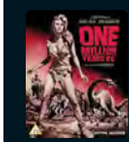
Steve Wright

FILM ★★☆☆☆

ONE MILLION YEARS BC

The land that time nearly forgot

Details PG // 96 mins // 1966 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** Out now
Director Don Chaffey **Cast** Raquel Welch, John Richardson, Martine Beswick
Distributor StudioCanal



Mainly remembered now for the iconic cover art, this Ray Harryhausen stop-motion creature feature has since been overshadowed by the likes of *Jason And The Argonauts* and *Clash Of The Titans*. Now, 50 years on, it's time to sit back and assess just how much of an achievement it was.

Taking place in a tumultuous time in prehistory as the Rock People and Shell People do battle, all the while attempting to avoid becoming prey for the various giant Harryhausen creations, the lack of coherent dialogue lends it a rhythmic feel. Despite the lead characters not being able to articulate beyond grunts and shrieks, the narrative is always crystal clear, and the monster fight sequences remain gripping regardless of their antiquity.

Coupled with some lovely new bonus features (such as interviews with stars Raquel Welch and Martin Beswick) and previously unseen storyboards supplied by the Ray and Diana Harryhausen Foundation, the result is something that covers both stop-motion students and sophomores alike.

Steve Wright

FILM ★★★★☆

SciFiNow Must see now!



TRIVIA ORIGINALLY, AMANDA SEYFRIED WAS ATTACHED TO THE LEAD ROLE IN *Z FOR ZACHARIAH*, BUT A DELAY IN FILMING SAW HER REPLACED WITH MARGOT ROBBIE.



Season Six

SciFiNow Must see now!

GAME OF THRONES

Winter is coming – look busy

SHOW INFO

Released
Out now
Year Made
2016
Certificate
18
Creators
David Benioff, DB Weiss
Cast
Peter Dinklage, Emilia Clarke, Kit Harington, Lena Headey, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Maisie Williams, Sophie Turner, Isaac Hempstead-Wright
Distributor
Warner Home Video
Running Time
535 mins
Format
Blu-ray, DVD



POWER PLAY

The pretenders to the throne of Westeros

Jon Snow
The new King in the North will be looking beyond the Wall, weary of the real threat. But he has enough enemies as it is – and what's Littlefinger up to?

Daenerys Targaryen
She has finally set sail for Westeros, with Tyrion, the Unsullied, the Dothraki and most of the Greyjoy fleet at her side. But is she just trading one frying pan for another?

Cersei Lannister
Okay, so she's got what she always wanted: a crown. But she has enemies on every side – can she keep hold of it? Does she even care?

Euron Greyjoy
Probably not a real contender himself, as he doesn't have all that much support. But we can still see him being a nuisance.

Winter King
It's snowy season, making it his time to cause havoc. The scary part? We've only seen a fraction of his true strength.

This must have been TV's equivalent of the gap between *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi*: waiting all that time to discover whether Jon Snow (Kit Harington) had survived being literally stabbed in the back by his sworn brothers at the Wall.

Happily, *Game Of Thrones* doesn't waste too much time answering this question, instead quickly circulating around the globe as it plots the progress of its massive cast. Mainly, it's a case of tracking down the main characters after their misfortunes in the previous season: Daenerys (Emilia Clarke) is the prisoner of a Dothraki horde; Cersei (Lena Headey) remains under house arrest after her humiliation in the Season Six finale at the hands of the High Sparrow (Jonathan Pryce); Arya (Maisie Williams) attempts to come to terms with her blindness, Jaime (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau) returns to King's Landing with his tale between his legs, having failed to save his daughter; and Sansa (Sophie Turner) and Theon (Alfie Allen) are on the run from their sadistic former captor, Ramsay (Iwan Rheon).

It's been much publicised that the end is in sight, and the body count is ratcheted up accordingly, with supporting cast members left, right and centre meeting unexpected ends. But – and this hasn't always been the case – they feel like they've occurred for the right reasons. It all comes across as organic, nothing is too gratuitous (by *Game Of Thrones*' standards), and they result in some of the best moments in the entire show's chronology – 'The Door' for instance, remains one of the best episodes of television we've seen in a while.

While last season's early slow-build wasn't always conducive to great viewing, there are enough standout moments to keep everyone happy: the return of Sandor Clegane (Rory McCann) is a welcome piece of fan service; Daenerys' fiery takedown of the assembled Khals is wonderfully executed, and David Bradley steals every scene he's in as the thoroughly loathsome Walder Frey.

As ever, however, Season Six stands out by virtue of its final two episodes. 'Battle Of The Bastards' presents not one, but two of the most memorable fight scenes in *Game Of Thrones* history: first, Daernerys takes to Drogon to destroy the invading slaver fleet, leaving Tyrion to deliver some





of his best one-liners. But it's all about Jon versus Ramsay. Visceral and brutal, it perhaps better than anything we've seen for a while encompasses the horror of war, with its raining arrows, suffocating mass of bodies and doomed, dying soldiers.

Then there's 'The Winds Of Winter'. Cersei ushers in the cold season with her own brand of explosive justice, proving that 'The Rains Of Castamere' isn't just a catchy tune. In one fell swoop taking out most of her enemies, she finally gains the power she has always craved – waiting for the other players to head in her direction, which by the final shot they are all proceeding to do.

This is what *Game Of Thrones* has always been about: moving its assorted chess pieces into place for the main event, despite their unwavering unwillingness to do so. But for it to manage this with so much style and aplomb is a sight to see. And with the end unavoidably nigh, it has set a high benchmark to surmount.

Steve Wright
SHOW ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Preacher
Another example of TV that doesn't compromise, we hope this sticks around for a good while yet.

TRIVIA OF THE SHOW'S 60 EPISODES TO DATE, THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY SIX IN WHICH NO ONE DIED.



Season Two

SciFiNow Must see now!

AGENT CARTER

The final curtain

Details 12 // 322 mins // DVD • Blu-ray // 5 December **Creators** Christopher Markus, Stephen McFeely **Cast** Hayley Atwell, James D'Arcy, Enver Gjokaj, Chad Michael Murray, Bridget Regan, Wynn Everett, Reggie Austin **Distributor** Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment



Agent Carter (Hayley Atwell) and Forties Hollywood go together marvellously. Everything that was glamorous and suave about *Agent Carter* Season One is transferred across the country from New York City, along with a little extra razzle-dazzle, and the result is fabulous.

The premiere of Season Two sees the start of a new case for Carter; when the new chief of the SSR's LA bureau, Daniel Sousa (Enver Gjokaj), requests backup after a body is found frozen in a lake during a heat wave, Carter sets off for Hollywood, sunglasses and Jarvis (James D'Arcy) in tow, to crack the case.

Just as Carter thinks she's getting closer to the centre of the mystery, more strings start to unravel as actress Whitney Frost (Wynn Everett) gains superhuman powers, and Carter's new scientist associate Dr Jason Wilkes (Reggie Austin) gets absorbed into a substance known as 'Zero Matter'.



Agent Carter's second season doesn't pack the same punch as its first. The stakes are still high in a life-or-death sort of way, but our heroine's career and integrity are no longer on the line. What Season Two lacks in that department it makes up for in just how spangly and 'Hollywood' it is. In this universe, palm trees, flamingos and casting agencies are a very welcome addition.

Season Two's ongoing love triangle between Carter, Sousa and Wilkes often feels like it's undermining the basis of Carter's character that was established in Season One, and that it's there just for the sake of getting some sexual – though prim – tension in there. We got to see Carter's romantic side in *The First Avenger*; now we just want to see her sleuthing and kicking butts.

Like Season One, however, the brother and sister-like working relationship between Carter and Jarvis is the best thing about the show. Every time they share the screen (which is still happily often), Atwell and D'Arcy absolutely kill it. In a perfect world, the show's cancellation would make room for a buddy sitcom spin-off starring the pair of them.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

SHOW ★★★★½

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Orphan Black
Tatiana Maslany and her team of sister clones try to get to the centre of a complex conspiracy.



Season One

CLEVERMAN

Monsters down under

Details 15 // 300 mins // BBC iPlayer // Out now **Creator** Ryan Griffen
Cast Hunter Page-Lochard, Rob Collins, Iain Glen, Deborah Mailman, Frances O'Connor
Distributor BBC



Even shows that are clearly of their time can be timeless. *Cleverman* is among the elite band that falls clearly into this category, its themes reflecting on issues like racism, immigration and segregation in a way that are sadly reflective of the world today.

This new show focuses on the lives of estranged Australian Aboriginal brothers Koen (Hunter Page-Lochard) and Waruu (Rob Collins) as they deal with the chaos caused by the tumultuous backdrop of heightening tensions between humans and the 'Hairypeople', who are partitioned off in ghettos away from the rest of the populace. Amid all this, Koen turns out to be the prophesised 'Cleverman', causing further strife between him and his sibling and threatening to set alight the whole tinderbox of a situation.

Initially at least, *Cleverman*'s strength lies in the ambiguities of its characters: Koen subsists by betraying Hairypeople for money; Waruu balances fighting for equal rights with a steamy affair with a journalist, and it's no surprise at all when xenophobic government minister Geoff Matthews (Andrew McFarlane) turns out to have a penchant for visiting Hairypeople-occupied brothels. Every character is problematic in some way, embodying the grey waters of the issues that permeate the show.



Effectively, *Cleverman* is a superhero show without the costumes – a mythology-infused drama that has plenty to say. Occasionally this ambition overreaches (the terrible CGI monster should have been kept in the shadows), and the ending is annoyingly abrupt, although the promise of a second season does alleviate our quibbles somewhat.

It doesn't quite manage to be the show it wants to be, but you have to admire the intention that clearly exists to be something different.

Steve Wright

SHOW ★★★½★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



In The Flesh
Hard-hitting allegory with an undead sheen, this was cancelled too soon.

TRIVIA DOTTIE UNDERWOOD ACTRESS BRIDGET REGAN TRAINED WITH A TAE KWAN DO EXPERT FOR HER ROLE IN *AGENT CARTER*.



Season Three

BLACK MIRROR Techno fear

Details 15 // 360 mins // NETFLIX // Out now **Creators** Charlie Brooker, Annabel Jones **Cast** Bryce Dallas Howard, Mackenzie Davis, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Jerome Flynn, Kelly Macdonald **Distributor** Netflix



Black Mirror has evolved as a show, and Season Three marks the next step, veering between brilliance and unfulfilling while for the most part residing in the former category.

'Nosedive' (★★★★) will be familiar to those who have seen the 'MeowMeowBeenz' episode of *Community*, although it stands out thanks to its determination to do more with the premise. Depicting a world in which users rate every social media interaction, dig a bit deeper and it's something else entirely, with Bryce Dallas Howard delivering a career-best performance.

'Playtest' (★★★★) is similarly impressive, even if it has less to say. Wyatt Russell is brilliant as the lead, going from wry everyman to a bundle of nerves throughout the episode's course. It will keep you guessing right up until the Terry Gilliam-evoking ending.

Undoubtedly the high point, however, is 'Shut Up And Dance' (★★★★★). Alex Lawther is a revelation as Kenny, who is blackmailed to commit a number of dangerous tasks, accompanied by the similarly entrapped Hector (Jerome Flynn). We really don't want to say too much, but it's up there with the best episodes *Black Mirror* has ever produced.

'San Junipero' (★★★) revolves around an affecting love story between the free-spirited Kelly (Gugu Mbatha-Raw) and the reserved Yorkie (Mackenzie Davis). *The Matrix* by way of *Pleasantville*, it's beautiful, but shows its hand too early, blunting the ending's impact.

'Men Against Fire' (★★) tasks its soldier leads with eliminating mutated humans known as roaches. Arguably the weakest instalment, its themes are delivered with a heavy hand and a lack of subtlety, exuding the 'no-shit Sherlock' anathema that characterised parts of Season One.

'Hated In The Nation' (★★★) uses its Scandi-detective-thriller sheen to disguise its interrogation of 21st century online staples, with Kelly Macdonald its world-weary Philip Marlowe. Despite the above description, it's pretty straightforward, taking the murder-mystery format and giving it a bend, if not an outright twist.

Bleak it may be, but *Black Mirror* has come of age, embedding its tendrils in the public consciousness. Those *Twilight Zone* comparisons are finally being justified.

Steve Wright

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Twilight Zone
The inspiration for *Black Mirror* is obvious, from its inventive premises right down to the cruel climaxes.



Season 11

RED DWARF Back in red

Details 15 // 172 mins // DVD + Blu-ray // Out now **Creators** Doug Naylor, Rob Grant **Cast** Chris Barrie, Craig Charles, Danny John-Jules, Robert Llewellyn **Distributor** 2entertain



After taking huge steps towards rediscovering its groove in Series X, the boys from the Dwarf are back for another run that is mostly another step in the right direction, and on this basis we're definitely looking forward to XII. It's a bit wobbly and somewhat inconsistent, but there are some great ideas here, and the chemistry between the cast is as wonderful as ever.

Much like X, the high points come when Naylor pushes the guys to take a good hard look at themselves. Take the hilarious 'Samsara,' for example, as they come across a ship that rewards or punishes the crew based on their selfishness and bad behaviour – which is obviously terrible news. There's also some great material mined from Lister's relationship with Cat: in 'Give And Take,' the selfish semi-human needs to be convinced to give his old bud a kidney, while the long-running question of Cat's virginity is finally (pretty much) answered in the excellent series finale 'Can Of Worms', which also features the series' best sight gag.



The execution doesn't always match the concept, however. Series opener 'Twentica' has one or two great jokes (and a welcome Kevin Eldon cameo), but too much doesn't land and it feels like a wasted opportunity. Similarly, 'Krysis', in which Kryten hits the halfway point in his lifespan and launches into his mid-life crisis, is very watchable, but never quite gets the laughs you'd expect. That being said, watching what happens when Rimmer is promoted to officer and decides to bio-print more of himself to fill his new Officers' Club in 'Officer Rimmer' is exactly as hilarious as we had hoped.

It's also worth noting that Naylor takes us through pretty much every *Red Dwarf* sub-genre, with some classic SF, some horror and plenty of classic close-quarters sitcom goodness. There are Starbug crashes, murderous droids, vengeful lifts and conversations about Lister's toenails.

And through all of it, Chris Barrie, Craig Charles, Danny John-Jules and Robert Llewellyn are fantastic. This may not be back at truly classic *Red Dwarf* standard, but it's a lot of fun.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★½

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Rick And Morty
Justin Roiland and Dan Harmon's comedy is filled with brilliant SF concepts and filthy humour.

TRIVIA CRAIG CHARLES AND DANNY JOHN-JULES ARE THE ONLY TWO ACTORS TO APPEAR IN EVERY EPISODE OF *RED DWARF*.

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74 Superhero Novels

Discover the under-appreciated sector of the superhero movement

72 Revisiting The Sandman: Season Of Mists **76** **Anne Rice**
78 Book Reviews **82** Ethan Young **84** Graphic Novel Reviews



The Sandman: Season Of Mists

Author: Neil Gaiman
Artists: Kelley Jones, Mike Dringenberg, Malcolm Jones III, Matt Wagner, Dick Giordano, George Pratt, P Craig Russell
Published: December 1990 – July 1991
Publisher: DC Comics

Lucifer resigns as ruler of Hell and gives Dream the responsibility of choosing a successor. As the dead start coming back, deities, demons and ambassadors flock to make their case for ownership. Everyone wants to rule in Hell, but who should?













Need to Read

The Sandman: Season of Mists

Why the fourth volume of Neil Gaiman's comic series is the best trip to Hell you'll ever take

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**


© Kyle Cassidy

Picking a favourite volume from Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* series is a tricky business. Ours changes every day. We could write endless pages on the serial-killer nightmares of *The Doll's House*, the family bonding of *Brief Lives* or the heartbreaking conclusion of *The Kindly Ones*, but there's something truly stunning about the arrangement of ideas in *Season Of Mists*.

The main plot begins when Dream, the series' brooding, unmoving central figure, is handed a terrible gift by Lucifer: the key to Hell. The First Of The Fallen has decided to retire. Naturally, he understands just how problematic he has made Dream's life.

A host of gods, demons and ambassadors from other realms arrive at The Dreaming to make their case for why Hell belongs to them, including series regulars like Odin, Thor, Loki, Choronzon and Bast, Lady of Cats, as well as unforgettable new faces (we will always have a place in our hearts for the adorable/terrifying Shivering Jemmy of the Shallow Brigade).

Although it works as its own beast, *Season Of Mists* is a crucial volume in Gaiman's story. It's not Lucifer's first appearance in *The Sandman*, but it's arguably the most memorable, taking a huge personal step while ensuring that he has paid Morpheus back 100 times over for the slight that occurs in *Preludes And Nocturnes* and establishing the blend of callousness, pathos and curiosity that would lead to Mike Carey's superb *Lucifer* solo run.

It also gives us a rich insight into the dynamic of the Endless. The volume begins with the inscrutable Destiny calling a family meeting that is doomed from the off. Old wounds are gleefully picked at by Desire, who provokes the fragile Delirium and guilts Dream into going to Hell to rescue his former lover Nada, who he condemned 10,000 years ago. This whole sequence is a great bit of high-stakes drama, and it reminds us that for all of Dream's aloofness and sense of responsibility, he is a proud, stubborn and occasionally impulsive character. This, and his touching relationship with the ever-wonderful Death, makes this almost-omnipotent character relatable, if not quite human.

Among the scheming, manipulation, and Cain and Abel's questionable entertainment are some of the most affecting and nightmarish moments of the entire series, and they mostly occur in the fourth chapter of the volume (the only one with art by Matt Wagner).

The concept of the dead coming back to life gets a very tight focus, as 13-year-old Charles Rowland finds the loneliness of life at boarding school during the holidays interrupted by the arrival of the dead and damned old boys and teachers. It's often shockingly funny, but it's frightening too (the school nurse's baby and almost-baby), brutal (the three bullies who sold their souls to Satan) and genuinely affecting, as the brutalised Charles eventually perishes in the school attic, watched over by murdered schoolboy Paine. When Death arrives for Charles, dressed in a truly wonderful jogging outfit, he decides to stay with his new friend, and the two set off hand in hand to see "What life has to offer us."

While this chapter is at a remove from the power plays, it reinforces one of *Season Of Mists*' most powerful and resonant concepts: Hell exists, but we play as big a part in our suffering as the demons that chain us.

Gaiman skilfully gives perspectives rather than definitive answers, using characters like the gruesomely tortured Breschau of Livonia (whose legendary brutality and brutal suffering are dismissed by Lucifer with a curt "Enough.") to show an afterlife that is complex but not always cruel. One of the series' great joys is the way it revels in exploring and celebrating the myths, legends and beliefs of cultures past, present and imagined, and while Hell is clearly dangerous and horrifying , the world of *The Sandman* is too humane to allow for a clear-cut division between good and evil. As Paine tells Charles, "Hell is a place, but you don't have to stay anywhere forever."

The issue of Hell is finally resolved by angels Duma and Remiel being ordered by their master to take up Lucifer's post, which drives the latter to the brink of rebellion before his silent brother's graceful acceptance brings him back. In a wonderful final twist, Remiel decides that running Hell is an opportunity to do some good. He interrupts the flaying of a doomed soul to tell him that his suffering has a purpose. "We will hurt you," he says. "And we are not sorry. But we do not do it to punish you. We do it to redeem you. Because afterward, you'll be a better person… and because we love you. One day, you'll thank us for it." As he flies off about his purpose, the bleeding soul on the rock moans despairingly, "That makes it worse. That makes it so much worse…"

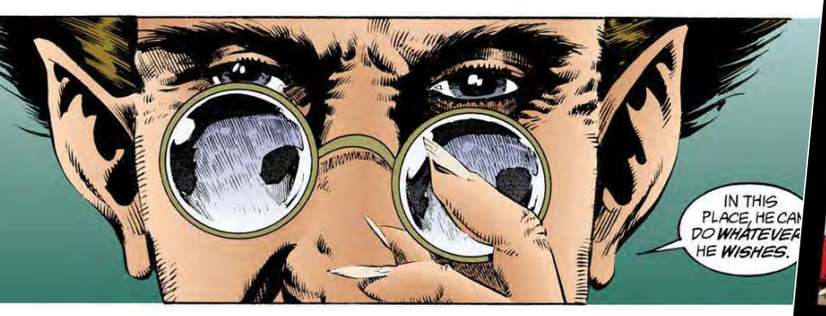
The Sandman Vol 4: Season Of Mists is available now, published by DC Comics.







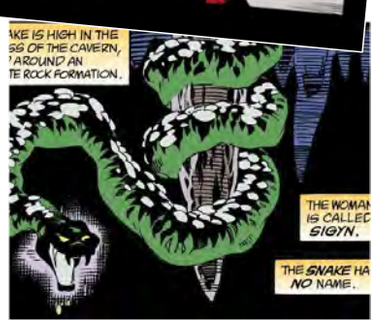
















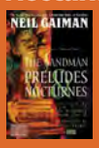




Go further

Explore the world beyond Neil Gaiman

The Sandman Vol 1: Preludes And Nocturnes (1991)



Gaiman begins his story with a bang. It's a little awkward, as it's clear he hasn't quite decided what he wants it to be, but the John Dee sequence is a horrifying nightmare.

American Gods (2001)



Gaiman's masterpiece (in prose form, at least) sees him take his fascination with ancient deities further, as the gods of the old world find themselves drawn into a conflict with our new obsessions, like media and technology.

Lucifer (2001-07)



Mike Carey picks up the Prince of Darkness from where Gaiman left him: running a bar in LA with his old cohort Mazikeen, and pitches him into an incredible struggle for power that spans Hell, Heaven and everywhere in between.

The Dead Boy Detectives (2001)



Charles and Paine were also given their own adventures, appearing in a couple of anthologies and their own solo run by Toby Litt, Mark Buckingham and Gary Erskine. It's not as good as *Season Of Mists*, but we love spending time with these two.

Damned (2011)



Chuck Palahniuk's novel is nowhere near as kindly, but it is absolutely hilarious, as a 13 year-old named Maddie spends her damnation working in Hell's telemarketing department and contemplating taking on a lot more responsibility.



Which sub-genre would you like to see tackled next?
Let us know on Twitter or Facebook

© Fimb

Many superhero novels have drawn inspiration from Alan Moore's (inset right) *Watchmen*.

A Beginner's Guide To Superhero novels

How do you tell a superhero story without images? WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

Thanks to Marvel Studios, Warner Bros and cinema in general, superheroes are no longer a niche interest subject. What have stood the niche test of time, however, are superhero novels, with lots of words and hardly any pictures.

'Superhero novels' aren't a sub-genre as such. They are more of a different way of reading the image-heavy stories that fans have been enjoying for decades. They offer a new way into the world of supervillains, science experiments, genetic mutations and weapons of mass destruction. They aren't there as a replacement comics and graphic novels, but rather as enrichment, and give a more fulfilling reading experience for those who favour words over images.

Though it's a graphic novel, Alan Moore's *Watchmen* has been informing the genre since it was first released in 1986. Not for nothing has it become a benchmark and source of inspiration for all kinds of dark, gritty superhero stories, causing its successors to draw their roots from *Watchmen*-esque alternate realities and dastardly antiheroes. The dark-and-gritty trend lends itself very well to the written word, owing to the fact that novels don't have to rely on bright colours and chaotic imagery.

Though superhero novels are still far from being as popular as traditional comic books, the yield is growing all the time. Novels from this century like Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures Of Kavalier And Klay* and Jonathan Lethem's *Fortress Of Solitude* prove that many people very much want to read about capes, masks and the dismantling of tyranny in prose format.

The prose adds more detail than speech bubbles ever could, and keeps you with the story for longer. But it also just feels more adult. For many, novels are like an upgrade from comic books, especially when someone gets their head cut off on every other page.



Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel was one of the inspirations for Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures Of Kavalier & Clay*.

© Steve Soboroff

Classic Superhero novel tropes

Everyone has a secret

Whether it's a secret identity, a secret allegiance or a secret family, almost everyone in the world of superheroes is hiding something. Sometimes they're trying to protect those they love, while at others they're just evil on the down low.

Dark and gritty

The lack of colour and visual storytelling in superhero novels means there's always room to make everything a lot darker and grittier than it would be in a regular graphic novels and comic books. With darkness and grittiness also come sex, violence and strong language.

Friends to enemies

The main relationship trope usually found in superhero novels is the exact opposite to that which is often found in fluffy rom-coms. Instead of going from arch-enemies to lovers, superheroes often find their childhood friends turning on them and becoming dead set on finishing them off.

Hero with a dark side

This particular trope has a few different gradients. There are some superheroes that are definitely bastards without being malevolent, who would laugh in your face as they help you up after a fall. Then there are some that finally snap after years of service and end up destroying entire towns.

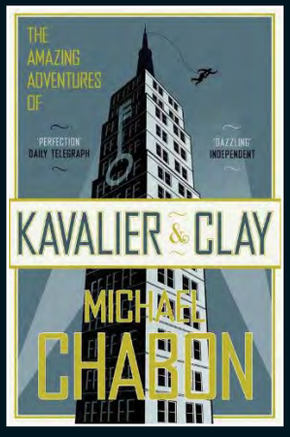


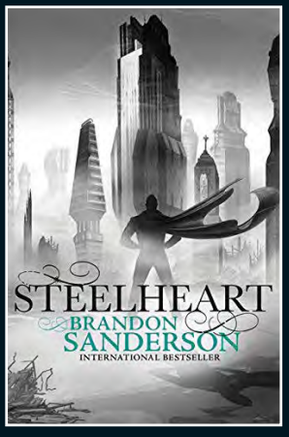
Frank Miller's work helped to inspire Austin Grossman's debut novel, *Soon I Will Be Invincible*.

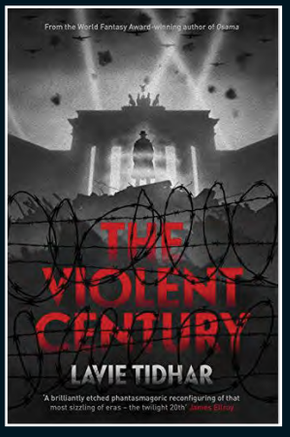
© Ferran Cornelia



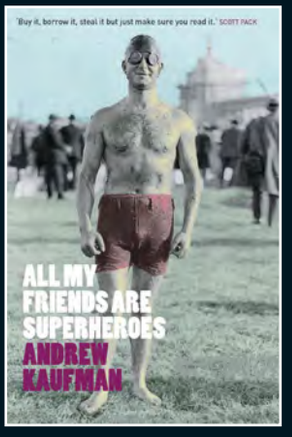
In the vein of *Batman V Superman*, many of the novels see the heroes devolve into darker tendencies.











Comic strips

The great escape

THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF KAVALIER & CLAY
Author: Michael Chabon
Publisher: Fourth Estate
Published: 2000
Price: £9.99

The globe-trotting adventure likes to hit you where it hurts. Set in 1939 and inspired by a number of real-life comics figures, 19-year-old refugee Josef Kavalier escapes Prague to stay with his cousin, Sammy Klayman, in NYC. Together they make their fortune by creating a comic strip called *The Escapist*, featuring a Nazi-busting superhero. Through their success, Joe becomes determined to free his family from the tyranny of Hitler in real life.

"Absolutely brilliant, one of my favourite books ever!" **Boldnerd**

Watch out

The Epics are coming

STEELHEART
Author: Brandon Sanderson
Publisher: Gollancz
Published: 2016
Price: £12.99

The first book in Sanderson's *Reckoners* series, *Steelheart* introduces us to a post-apocalyptic world in which an orbiting object dubbed 'Calamity' explodes in the sky. The resulting radiation causes random superhuman powers, turning people into 'Epics', but their powers aren't all they're cracked up to be. Many of the Epics are quickly compelled to hunt and enslave the human race. Thus the Reckoners, an elite underground resistance movement, is born.

"Enjoyed the different take on the superhero and the idea that they might not be the good guys. #BookClub" **@kshoni_gunputh**

This is war

Friends until the end

THE VIOLENT CENTURY
Author: Lavie Tidhar
Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton
Published: 2013
Price: £8.99

The *Watchmen* influences are strong in Tidhar's Cold War epic. The story starts with best friends and superheroes of a bygone age, Oblivion and Fogg. The former can make things vanish, while the latter can manipulate fog. They were inseparable until a night in Berlin during World War II finally pulled them apart after 70 years of companionship. When the two of them meet up in a London bar to revisit one of their old missions, they are forced to take another look at their complicated past.

"The historical aspects are excellent. I love WWII supernatural stories #BookClub" **@HannahChapter1**

Bad guys do it well

How to take over the world

SOON I WILL BE INVINCIBLE
Author: Austin Grossman
Publisher: Pantheon Books
Published: 2007
Price: £4.99

Grossman, who has cited Alan Moore and Frank Miller as influences, takes the regular superhero tropes in new directions in this clever debut. The story is told from alternating first person narratives from two very different narrators; Fatale, a female cyborg recruited into a superhero group known as The New Champions, and Dr Impossible, a supervillain with super-human strength and intellect during a jailbreak and his 13th attempt at world domination.

"Honestly really good. You end up cheering on the villain. Easily the best character. #BookClub" **@imquitegood**

The power of love

Time to meet the friends

ALL MY FRIENDS ARE SUPERHEROES
Author: Andrew Kaufman
Publisher: Telegram Books
Published: 2006
Price: £7.99

This one is a little more outlandish; it's a superhero-romance-tragedy. It's also extremely cute, and can easily be devoured in one sitting. Tom, a regular everyday guy, is engaged to the Perfectionist, a superhero. During the course of their courtship, Tom is introduced to her superhero friends, each with peculiar powers of their own. But when the Perfectionist's ex hypnotises her into thinking Tom is invisible, it puts a strain on the couple's relationship.

"An excellent take on the typical superhero theme. Swift, character driven read with lots of hilarious superpowers!" **@PasmineJalmer**



Return of the Queen

Anne Rice tells us how she turned the vampire world upside down with Prince Lestat And The Realms Of Atlantis

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

© Michael Lionstar

In 2014, Anne Rice returned to *The Vampire Chronicles* for the first time in over ten years, taking us back to the world of the vampire Lestat and his fellow creatures of the night. As well as serving as a reintroduction to the Brat Prince, Louis, Armand, Marius and all our favourites, it began a new chapter in the story, as Lestat became the host for the mysterious and powerful spirit Amel, and the crowned Prince of the entire vampire realm.

Of course, no one said that ruling would be easy, and *Prince Lestat And The Realms Of Atlantis* presents him and the vampires with a threat that they've never faced before: beings that are not human or vampire; rather seemingly immortal and with some connection to a long-lost kingdom. They might also be the ones to destroy these ancient beings.

We spoke to Rice about bringing something completely new to *The Vampire Chronicles*, giving each of her characters their due, and why everyone should watch *Dracula's Daughter*.

Prince Lestat was the first _Vampire Chronicles_ novel in some time. How was it picking up his world again so quickly with _The Realms Of Atlantis_?

I had a long break between *Blood Canticle* in 2003 and *Prince Lestat*; I was really ready for Lestat again when I wrote that last novel. I was envisioning new stories and new adventures, and felt a keen and delicious pressure to explore how the modern world, with all its computers, digital info, surveillance, and communication webs, was impacting supernatural beings. Well, that's still going on in *Realms Of Atlantis*. Other supernatural entities are also using the Internet to come together, to find one another perhaps after centuries of being lost from one another, and the vampire tribe becomes intermingled with the concerns of those other characters for some striking reasons.

How did you settle on Derek and his fellows, and the city of Atalantaya, as the driving force for this new story?

Allow me to confess. Derek and his fellows were alive in my mind and heart years ago, as I planned out and started to write a novel called *Born For Atlantis*, but I couldn't make the novel work. Then out of the blue, the idea came to me: why not connect this novel with the vampires? This had worked for me once before in a novel called *Memnoch The Devil*. In that case, I'd played with a novel about a human being recruited by Satan to be his helper, and it hadn't worked until Lestat became the recruit, and then that novel blazed into life. Well, the same thing happened here. When I explored the connection, the whole story of Atlantis, exactly as I had envisioned it, became workable as part of a new challenge to Lestat and the vampires. Derek and his fellows claimed knowledge of and connection to Amel. And suddenly, I found myself deep in a novel that was a genuine novel of Lestat and a genuine novel of Atlantis.

Was it fun to throw something completely new at the vampires, who can seem to know it all?

Yes, it was fun all right. It was beyond fun. I was thrilled at bringing my Gothic romantic world of tragic heroes into contact with the venerable and enchanting legend of a lost utopian kingdom buried by the sea 12,000 years ago. In fact, it all worked so well that I felt I was channelling a true story; I felt I had tuned into a voice outside myself. I find it intriguing that David Wilcock is one of those 'ancient alien theorists'

> **I FELT A KEEN AND DELICIOUS PRESSURE TO EXPLORE HOW THE MODERN WORLD WAS IMPACTING SUPERNATURAL BEINGS**
> ANNE RICE

who sees popular novels and movies as often offering real truth about our connections with ETs and other planets. As I understand David, he speculates that authors and filmmakers are given the info by ETs or by our government. But I thought, what if it is channelled? And people have been claiming to channel the stories of ancient Atlantis for the last 200 years. Well, what if we novelists receive messages from some realm where all these truths are known? Understand, I don't believe this. I don't disbelieve it. I'm saying it felt like this to write it.

Is it a challenge to ensure that Lestat's fellows get the time they deserve?

Yes, it is a challenge. I have to account for the major characters. I have to explain why we're not hearing from everybody and why we're hearing only from some. For example, in this novel I certainly had to include Armand, Gregory, Fareed and Seth, of course. They are part of Lestat's new royal court of the Undead in France. But I had to make sure Pandora and Gabrielle and Sevraine were around too, because of course they would be. But I love working with a large cast.

I love accommodating a reality that must involve numerous players. When I slip into their world I encounter all these people. One of the joys of *Realms* was dealing not only with new characters, but the challenge of Rhoshamandes' continuing hatred of Lestat, and the inevitability of there being Undead who aren't happy about there being a prince of the vampires. I hope from now on to be working in all future novels with the whole tribe. The time of the individual vampire memoir novel is past for me.

Is there a _Vampire Chronicles_ novel that you'd most like to see adapted?

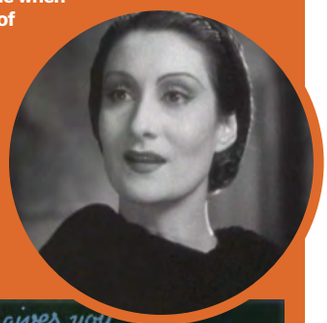
I would love to see *The Vampire Lestat* made into a film. I think that is the book the readers most want to see in a film as well. Lestat's life story, as it unfolds in the novels, has never been told in a film.

Prince Lestat And The Realms Of Atlantis will be released on 29 November, published by Chatto & Windus.

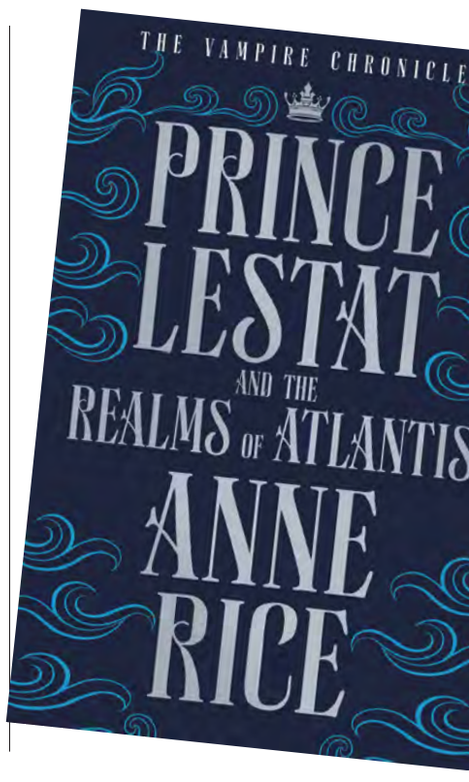
Anne Rice on Dracula's Daughter

The author tells us about the classic film that inspired her

"_Dracula's Daughter_ (1934) with Gloria Holden is the vampire film that started it all for me. I saw this at the neighbourhood show when I was a little kid. It was already old and creaky. This was in the time when a ticket to the theatre was 12 cents and a bag of potato chips or a piece of candy was 5 cents. I loved that film. I loved its foggy London Gothic atmosphere and the romance of the doomed Countess, a painter, struggling with her vampire thirst night after night. This film inspired everything I've ever written about vampires. I have always seen them as tragic figures, beautiful, seductive, sensitive struggling against the curse that gives them immortality. That's a true classic. That for me was seminal."







Your Last Five Books You Recommended to Someone

CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE @SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



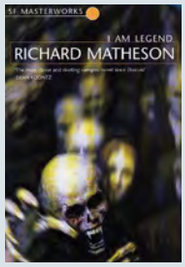
1. The Dresden Files

"The books are very funny, but also tell a great story with dynamic characters. @HarriedWizard #BookClub"
@DanielSWos



2. Swan Song

"*Swan Song* by Robert R McCammon because he needs to be better known round these parts. #BookClub"
@Hannah Chapter1



3. I Am Legend

"I Am Legend. For the simple fact is far better than the awful film that came out a few years ago. #BookClub"
@dicanio72



4. The Water Knife

"Finished Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife*, so now I can say his name, he's getting my vote. #BookClub"
@TheCorvid Archer



5. Scary Stories To Tell In The Dark

"Also great for English learner. Ofc i didn't warn them about the illustration. #BookClub"
@distiii

Details **Author:** Lauren Beukes **Publisher:** Tachyon Publications **Price:** £13.09 **Released:** 29 November

SLIPPING

Tomorrow's world

With her novels *Moxyland*, *Zoo City*, *The Shining Girls* and *Broken Monsters*, Lauren Beukes has established herself as one of the genre's most exciting voices. The stories assembled here not only show off her eclectic range of influences and interests, but the strength of her voice, her passion for her subjects, and that fantastic blend of anger, analysis, sensitivity and wit.

Several of the stories show an uncertain near future in which technology and humanity exist in an uneasy co-dependency. The titular 'Slipping' is the story of Pearl, a teenage athlete competing in an Olympic event in which the runners' cybernetic enhancements are discussed more than their own skills. With her distrust of authority and personal belief system, Pearl's struggle is her own.

Tech concerns come through with a more classic dystopian feel in sci-fi tales like 'The Green,' in which a bunch of grunts harvest terrifying flora and fauna for an uncaring corporation and may be worth more dead than alive, depending on what killed them. 'Riding With The Dream Patrol' is set in 2017 and finds journalist Lauren Beukes reporting on the government's use of social media to monitor us, and doesn't feel very sci-fi at all.

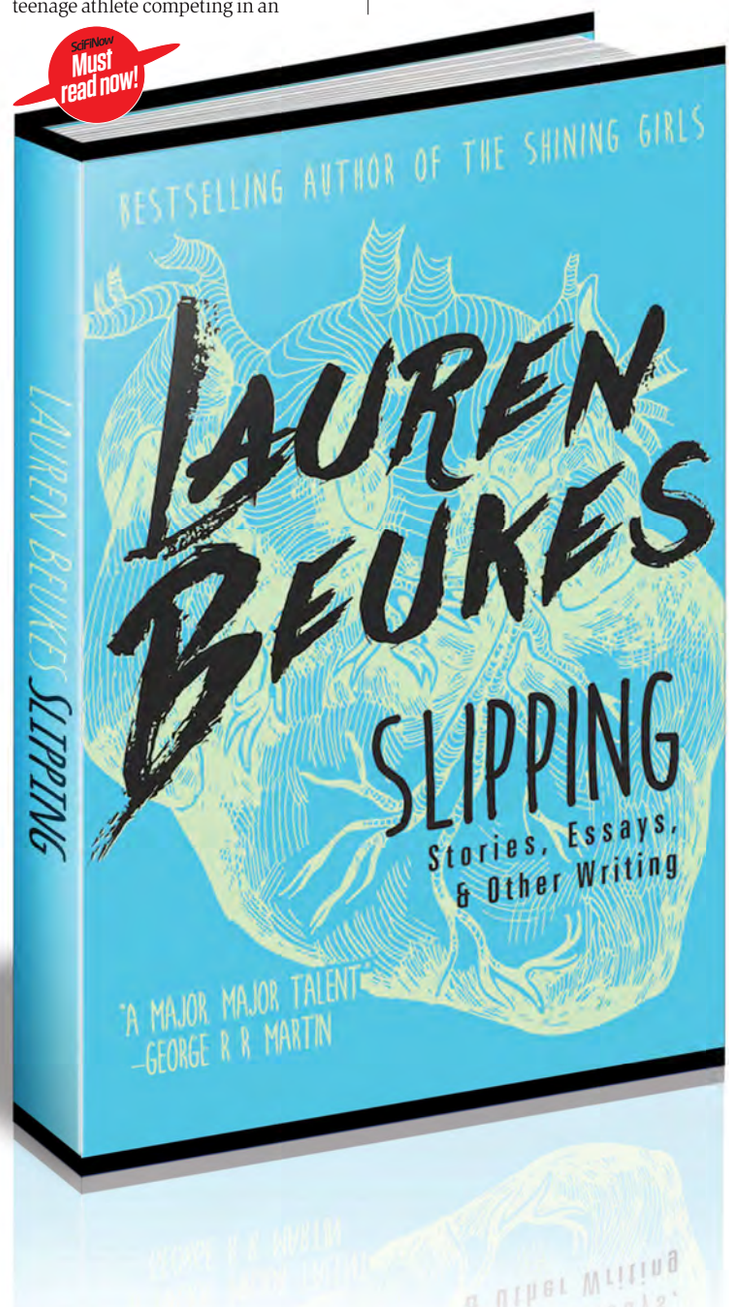
Several hallmarks of Beukes' writing, such as her fascination with modern connectivity, the art world and the personas we create for ourselves, come through again and again in this collection. In 'Pop Tarts,' a reality star is forced into a violent and unwelcome crossover with another up and coming personality.
In 'Exhibitionist', a young artist shares floor space with a Cronenbergian living machine that may or may not feel pain. In the non-genre 'Easy Touch,' a front-man for one of those classic email scam collectives tries to guide an increasingly impatient woman through her final payment. One or two of the stories feel like they're nudging up against each other, but they are in the minority.

There are stories that have no genre element at all, simply focusing on attempts at human connection, or on people facing unwanted attention. While she can certainly deliver delirious, pop-culture-strewn explosions of science fiction (we're referring to 'Unathi Battles The Black Hairballs,' in which the titular character fights a gigantic hair monster in Tokyo before going on a very trippy journey involving performance art, talking cats and the infamous Suicide Forest), she is just as capable of giving us a vivid and strong character like Thozama, who tries to fend off a 'helpful' vigilante while carrying her produce to her shop in the excellent 'Smileys'.

Couples come together and separate, stalkers are confronted with the grim facts of their behaviour, lonely people debate doing a Tom Ripley to their friends, and students learn to be more selfless by befriending teenage ghost girls. The best short story collections should feel like a treasure trove, a carefully curated present from the author to the reader. If you're a fan of Beukes' work, this is a gift.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



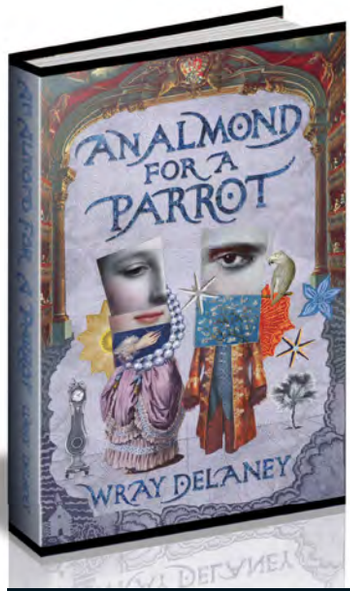
Three Moments Of An Explosion
China Miéville
Miéville's short story collection is superb, effortlessly combining sci-fi, horror and wonder.

Details **Author:** Wray Delaney **Publisher:** Harlequin **Price:** £12.99 **Released:** Out now

AN ALMOND FOR A PARROT

Erotic magic

We meet Tully Truegood in 1756 in Newgate Prison, where she's awaiting trial for the murder of her husband. She does not lament her deed. Instead she clings to her memories by writing her autobiography with pen and ink as she sits in her cell in an attempt to out the truth of her unjust situation.



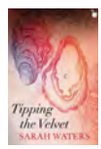
Wray Delaney has written a saucy rags-to-riches erotic novel that is entirely entertaining in its raunchy description of sexual encounters, as heroine Tully comes of age and blossoms into a confident woman. From her time spent cooped up in a decaying London dwelling, where her brute of a father forces her into a marriage, to the brothel she comes to call home, Delaney shades in Tully's journey to an emancipation of sorts in a completely engaging manner. She whips up a strong feminist chant about inequality regarding women's choices for financial independence and sexual freedom.

There's fun to be had with Tully's apprenticeship under a highly regarded magician, who helps her harness her medium skills. Their relationship becomes the caring father-daughter type she so longed for, and its evolution is both warming and exciting. This narrative also conjures up some fantastic fairy-tale-like imagery. Tully in fact inherits two step-sisters and a step-mother, though in a cunning subversion all these characters are not wicked, but very good. They're a product of their times that may have been vilified for their profession, but exhibit traits such as decency, loyalty and integrity.

However, it must be said that the ghosts almost feel like a secondary consideration. Though many appear, few stick in the memory aside from a young girl named Pretty Poppet whose tragic demise is truly upsetting. The manifestations become mildly repetitive as their yarns unfold and they lack a certain spookiness with the atmosphere feeling more mysterious than chilling. Towards the end, a cheap twist involving male homosexuality leaves an entirely icky residue, which is strange considering the lesbian arcs are so gracefully handled.

Katherine McLaughlin

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Tipping The Velvet
Sarah Walters
A young woman moves from the seaside to London to come of age in the theatrical world and learn all about sex and politics in the Victorian era.

Details **Author:** James Islington **Publisher:** Orbit **Price:** £8.99 **Released:** Out now

THE SHADOW OF WHAT WAS LOST

Shadow Politics

Fans of Robert Jordan's *The Wheel Of Time* series will want to give this chunky doorstep of a book a look.

The Unseen War saw the end of a life ruled by the imperious Augurs, who appeared to lose their fearful abilities, and are now considered extinct. Left in their wake, the Gifted have only managed to survive by agreeing to abide by The Four Tenets, those who disobey become Shadows, stripped of powers, branded and the lowest of the low.

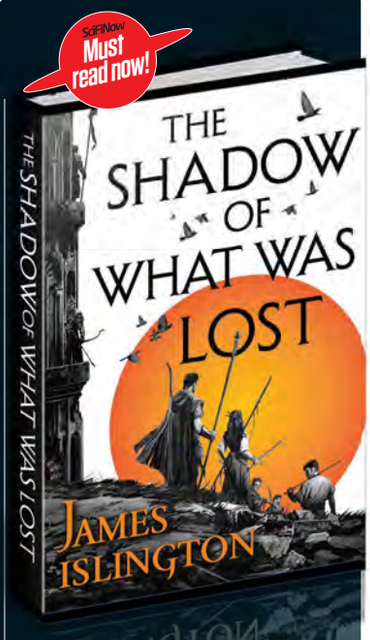
Davian is Gifted, as are his good friends Wirr and Asha, who have all been kept safely at a special school. Davian knows his gift is different to that of his friends, and is terrified of failing tests that may lead to shadow status. So, when a visiting Elder offers a way out, Davian accepts rather than face failure and banishment. What he does not quite realise is that sinister forces are at work.

What is most joyful about this read is the simplicity of the narrative. Simplicity must not be mistaken for predictability, there are numerous surprises to be found within these silky, smooth pages. There is action aplenty and an ample spattering of violence, which is thankfully neither gratuitous or gorily graphic.

Islington is not ashamed to admit that he has drawn inspiration from the likes of Jordan and Brandon Sanderson, but inspiration aside this is a whole new world with a fresh fantasy streak of its own.

Claire Nicholls

★★★★★





IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

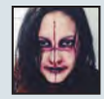
Road to Shandara
Ken Lozito
A demon sentinel looks to steal powers of Aaron Jace, who is only just discovering them himself.

YOUR READS

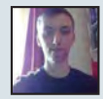
What you lot have been reading this month



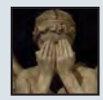
"I am dipping into some tales in the *Hellbound Hearts Hellraiser* anthology. Damnation awaits... #Bookclub" **@ParsonsFiction**



"*The Girl With All The Gifts* – can't say I'm enjoying it but it's a very interesting and different take on a zombie outbreak. #BookClub" **@mickeyralph**



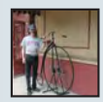
"*Batman: The Court Of Owls*. Love how it both adds and reinvents the mythos. #BookClub" **@Jbarnes532**



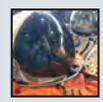
"Still rereading *The Scarlet Letter* and now also rererererereading *The Hobbit*. Thanks to #amazonread #BookClub" **@DanielSWos**



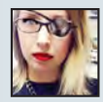
"Just finished the new Peter F Hamilton and it's pretty good. Now re-reading *The Reality Dysfunction* for the first time in a decade. #BookClub" **@daddacool**



"*The Fifth Heart* by Dan Simmons. Almost finished and not bad overall . #BookClub" **@Harlegator68**



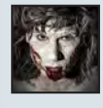
"I'm halfway through *Beacon 23* by @hughhowey and loving it! #scifi #BookClub" **@sftmqa**



"Book 4 of the *Throne Of Glass* series! #BookClub" **@ecdahl**



"Listening to *The Fireman* by Joe Hill, and lov'n it! #BookClub" **@TheeALLang**



"*A Closed And Common Orbit*. I'm not very far in but I'm already super intrigued and loving it. #BookClub" **@JennieFondue**

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60 SECONDS WITH



WRAY DELANEY

How would you pitch *An Almond For A Parrot*?
A magical surrealist, historical and erotic novel that is peppered with mystery.

Did you consciously set out to write a novel for older readers?
I have longed to write for older readers for some time, and then this idea came to me, so it was consciously done.

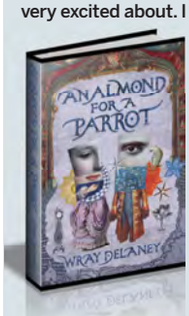
How much fun was it to take a setting like 18th-century London and use it for a tale like this?
Delicious. Absolutely velveteen in its deliciousness.

Tully's first-person narration has that classic confessional feel to it. Did the story always have that voice?
Yes, it was a voice I wanted. An external-internal voice.

Were there any authors you particularly looked to for inspiration?
Angela Carter; *Fanny Hill* by John Cleland; *Evelina* by Frances Burney, not so much for the story, but for the language. *Tristram Shandy*, which is such a lovely read, and then a collection called *Eighteenth-Century British Erotica*.

Have you always been drawn to the fantasy genre?
I've always been drawn to fairy tales, mainly because I think it speaks to the heartbeat of our souls. I think fantasy is a way of making sense of the nonsensical – a place where the mind can rest, take nourishment and grow.

Do you anticipate going back and forth between adult fiction and books for younger readers?
I would like to. I've already got two more Wray Delaney books to write, which I am very excited about. I think it's a matter of knowing the audience you are writing for – I've always thought that. And there is a definite freedom in writing for adults.



An Almond For A Parrot is out now, published by HQ.

Details **Author:** Lila Bowen **Publisher:** Orbit Books **Price:** £8.99 **Released:** Out now

CONSPIRACY OF RAVENS

A railroad to nowhere

After the glorious Weird West adventure of Lila Bowen's *Wake Of Vultures*, this sequel is a bit disappointing. It's not that the writing is any less compelling, or that the characters are any less fascinating; it's just that the second book in the *Shadow* series feels far too much like, well, the second book in a series.

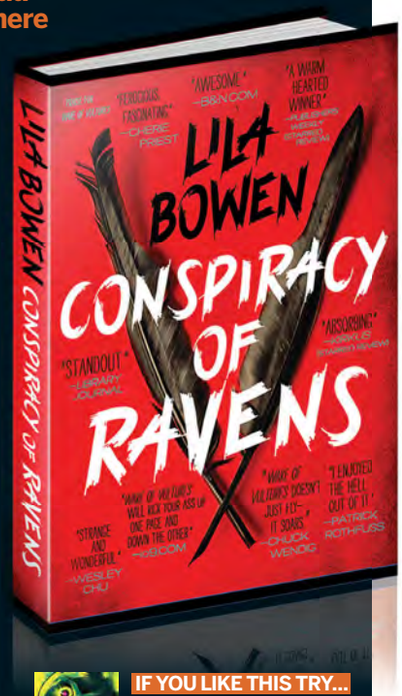
It picks up where the first book left off, as former slave Rhett takes a leap of faith and discovers yet another new facet of his identity: he can shape-shift into a carrion bird. Having defeated the monster stalking his dreams in the first book, he's seeking a new quest with all the friends he made last time around, plus a few more stragglers for good measure.

The new quest turns out to be vanquishing railroad tycoon-slash-wizard Bernard Trevisan, a creepy alchemist who enslaves magical creatures like Rhett and makes them lay the tracks for a mysterious railway. It's a smart use of Western tropes, and Bowen gives it a suitably monstrous spin. But something in the structuring of this novel doesn't work properly. It's so packed with ideas, dilemmas, and characters that the actual plot doesn't have much room to breathe.

It's the least interesting part of the book, anyway. What's interesting is Rhett's continuing journey towards figuring out who he is. In the first novel, that quest meshed with his supernatural one; this time round, fighting Trevisan feels like a distraction. The open ending doesn't help either; it basically does the equivalent of freezing Han in carbonite, leaving things frustratingly unresolved.

Maybe book three will make it all feel worthwhile, and in spite of everything it's still a joy to spend time in Bowen's alt-history world of magic and monsters.

Sarah Dobbs
★★★☆☆





IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Awesome
Eva Darrows
Monster hunter Maggie has a problem: as a virgin, she can't fight vampires. Honest, sweet and funny.

Details **Author:** Steiner Bragi **Publisher:** Macmillan **Price:** £12.99 **Released:** Out now

THE ICE LANDS

Two books, one story?

Hrafn, Vigdis, Anna and Egill are four city dwellers who decide to go on a road trip to escape their lives for a week or two – what could possibly go wrong?

When they hit the highlands, a car crash forces them to take refuge with a mysterious old couple, trapped by the weather that prevents any attempt at escape. As the claustrophobia sets in, the four friends find their relationships tested, and there's something horrible lurking in their midst.



There are two halves that feel almost at war with each other within *The Ice Lands*. One is an absorbing drama, as a group of friends deal with the fallout of the financial crisis, while the other is a slow-burning environmental horror. Peppered through this are bits taken from Icelandic folklore, urban legends, and pretty much any road trip horror movie you can recall.

But Bragi never manages to mesh this into a satisfying whole, and the novel feels like it has escaped from him before you reach the end of the prose. There is, however, some creepy fun to be had along the way. Bragi sets up a central mystery, but prefers to err on the side of ambiguity, leaving it to the reader to decide for themselves.

He uses the Icelandic landscape, at once beautiful and terrifying, to stunning effect. The expanse of it contrasts sharply to the claustrophobia of the old couple's cabin, and Bragi makes sure that neither of them feels any safer than the other. Yet the characters wander into horrors with such little reaction that the impact of the environment lessens as the novel progresses.

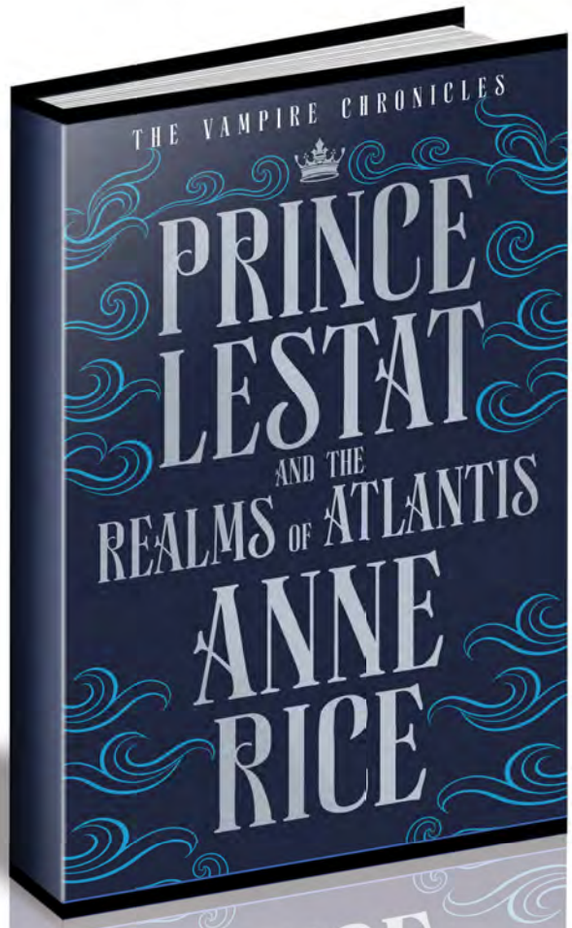
Though the novel's two halves never quite align, *The Ice Lands* is a tale heavy on atmosphere, even if the level of satisfaction it inspires might vary from reader to reader. Still, the positives just about outweigh the negatives, and its haunting effect cannot be denied.

Becky Lea
★★★☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Ritual
Adam Nevill
Four friends head to the wilds of northern Sweden, and soon discover that they've awoken something ancient.



> "THE ATLANTIS STORYLINE BRINGS SOMETHING NEW TO THE VAMPIRE CHRONICLES"

Details **Author:** Anne Rice **Publisher:** Chatto & Windus **Price:** £20 **Released:** 29 November

PRINCE LESTAT AND THE REALMS OF ATLANTIS

The Brat Prince returns

After the 11-year wait for the last book, fans of Anne Rice's Brat Prince have had a much shorter wait for their new *Vampire Chronicle*. A lot of *Prince Lestat* was spent catching readers up, which theoretically frees this up to jump straight into the story.

Lestat is now the Prince of the Vampire Court, and the host for ancient dangerous spirit Amel, the being responsible for linking each vampire together. Although he loves Amel, he's less sure about the responsibilities and constrictions that come with this new position.

Meanwhile, his old foe, Rhoshamandes, has found a mysterious creature named Derek, whose strange biology holds the key to an ancient secret, and the potential for the vampires' final destruction.

At this point, reading a Lestat story is like meeting up with an old friend, especially when Rice writes the character in first person, and most of all when he's talking with Louis. However, the lack of forward momentum makes this a difficult book to recommend for those who aren't devotees. Rice has never been prone to rushing, but this book feels like it could use more urgency, particularly during the middle third. Her obvious love for the characters means that there's never really any sense of danger, despite the interesting and unusual powers of Derek and his kin.

However, the Atlantis storyline does bring something new to the *Chronicles*, and it's nice to see the vampires forced to confront something they've never seen before. The genuine weirdness of these creatures is actually quite wonderful.

Fans of the saga should pick this up, as there are lovely character moments and an interesting new threat, while newcomers might need a more accessible entry point.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Lost Souls
Poppy Z Brite
Brite's vampire debut is a vibrant explosion of darkness, angst, lust and gore. Everyone should read it.

Details **Author:** Alison Littlewood **Publisher:** Jo Fletcher Books **Price:** £14.99 **Released:** Out now

THE HIDDEN PEOPLE

Is she really your wife?

Albie Mirrals met his cousin only once, ten years prior to her death at the hands of her husband. When the news that she has been burned to death reaches him, he is compelled to abandon his wife to travel to the village of Halfoak and discover the truth. As the villagers whisper about pretty Lizzie Higgs, who they believe to be a faerie changeling – Albie begins to question the reality of his own ordered world.

Set shortly after *Wuthering Heights* was released, *The Hidden People* attempts to echo the same chilling, wild atmosphere of the Yorkshire countryside and mostly succeeds. The rural community is so saturated in the supernatural that we begin to understand how Albie's grip on the rational could slip, as do we let our own, expecting the faeries to release Lizzie's true form at any moment.

However, Littlewood has missed the mark when attempting to recreate the voice of the era. Unneeded words creep into sentences making, them lengthy and difficult to digest, and adversely affecting the pace of the story.

Just as an interesting event takes place and the book promises to speed up, you're brought back to a halt by clogged-up paragraphs, further losing momentum. Even when we begin to hear Lizzie's voice from beyond the grave in the form of her diary, this device is not utilised enough to make you feel like you're getting anywhere.

If this book didn't stop and start so frequently it would be a great read. As it is, it's simply okay.

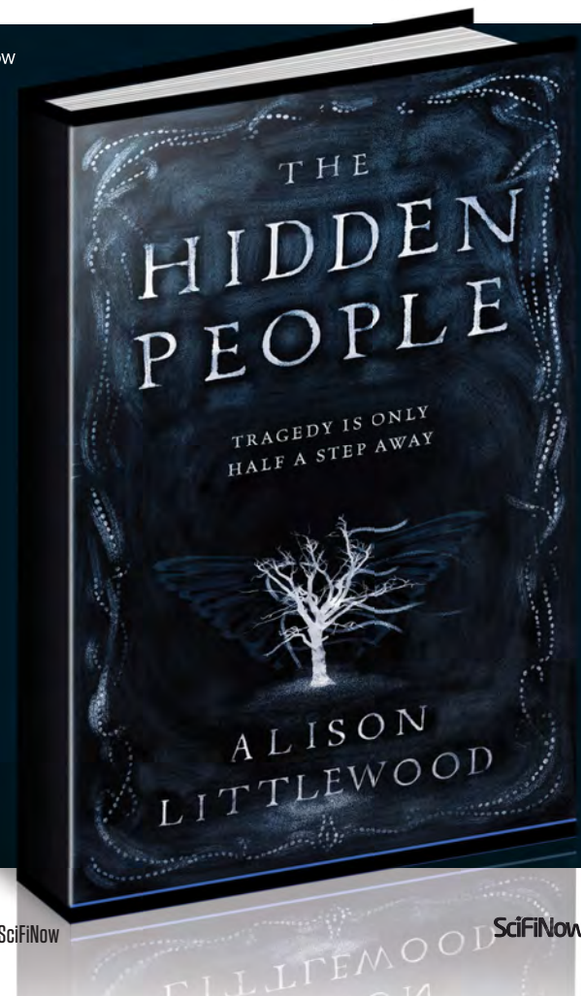
Amy Martin

★★★☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Strings Of Murder
Oscar De Muriel
Two very different detective's team together to hunt down what is apparently demon murdering violin players in Victorian Edinburgh.




Others whose fates could have been mine: lonely
Soon, I'll be piloting one of those, Elliot. I've read EVERY training manual I could find.
ne battles of
Bridget Lee
INVASION OF FARFALL
...and RED PRIME.
YOU ARE WEAK!
YOU WILL FAIL!
-GASP-
It's hard to get rest some nights.
Yes. I'm dead asleep.
A PIGGY'S TALE
The Adventures of a 3-Legged Super-Pup!
Tod Emko & Ethan Young
He's not remarkable or special. I've taken out hundreds like him before.
Was HE the one who killed James? Doesn't matter. I'm going to END him either way. I know all his weak spots.
--I freeze up.
Together, we all form one big family. It's hard to imagine life without them.
We've been following rumors on the internet of a super dog rescuing people around the world.
Wanna bring us along next time? You know it's dangerous out there without me watching your back!
You've been everywhere!
Careful, Simon, it sounds like you might actually
Relax, I've got things covered...

THE BATTLES OF ETHAN YOUNG

Talking bad-ass heroines and flying superdogs with the rising star

WORDS LAURA SNEDDON



RECENTLY THRUST INTO THE SPOTLIGHT WITH HIS CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED GRAPHIC NOVEL NANJING: THE BURNING CITY WINNING A COVETED SILVER REUBEN Award, Ethan Young's latest work, *The Battles Of Bridget Lee: Invasion Of Farfall*, was released in October to great excitement from fans.

It's far from Young's first brush with sci-fi as both his original web comic *Tails* and his current children's comic series *A Piggy's Tale* (with writer Tod Emko) both feature adventures both supernatural and superpowered, but it does mark the beginning of an ongoing series aimed squarely at an all-ages readership.

Over the past few decades the presence of comics that are read by children and adults alike have somewhat disappeared from the public eye but in recent years they have undergone quite the renaissance – as popular with children as they are with older fans.

Meanwhile, *A Piggy's Tale* released its first collection at New York Comic Con, with real life shaggy star Piggy lapping up the acclaim!

We sat down with Young to catch up on his growing fame and catalogue.

The Battles Of Bridget Lee: Invasion Of Farfall sees the titular war veteran looking after the oldest and youngest at a far-flung outpost in the middle of a galactic conflict. The human race is essentially living under occupation where surviving generations have only ever known war, and fear attack any day. What was the inspiration behind the graphic novel itself, and its turbulent setting?

I wanted to do a comic about the *Mulan* folk tale, but through a soft sci-fi allegory. This way, I wouldn't have to be as stringent with details or accuracy; I could create a whole new world of my choosing. As for the backdrop of a futuristic war, it allows us to immediately establish urgency for all the characters while setting up very high stakes from the get-go. There is that added tension to every move.

In some small way, I also drew upon my own life experience. I lived really close to the World Trade Centre on 9/11, and my family couldn't get back into our apartment for weeks. There was a palpable sense of unease, and every New Yorker had to learn to navigate this new understanding of the world, one which included the possibility of an attack. With the characters in *Bridget Lee*, that's what their daily life is like; always on alert.

> SCI-FI IS A GENRE WHERE WE'RE ALLOWED TO REINVENT THE WORLD AND SET UP OUR OWN INTERNAL RULES
> ETHAN YOUNG

The character of Bridget Lee is Asian American and, of course, a woman – a pretty rare protagonist in western media as a whole, let alone comics. What led you to choose her as your protagonist rather than the more 'conventional' gruff white dude?

Diversity. Sometimes you just have to move forward with it. Sci-fi is a genre where we're allowed to reinvent the world and set up our own internal rules. And more often than not, the protagonists all look the same, feel the same, etc.

I wanted to offer representation not just for younger Asian American readers, but for anyone craving something different. The character of Bridget Lee is inspired by many great women in my life, so she holds a special significance.

There's a lot of world-building here, with very little exposition or drawn-out history lessons. How did you achieve that balance, and do you have that history and extended knowledge all planned out? And will there be any future instalments?

I have the history loosely planned out, but it's still fluid. The structure is there, but not the details yet; those can come organically as we go. As for future instalments, yes, I would love to do them. That would all depend on how this first volume is received, so fingers crossed.

You are also the co-creator and artist of _A Piggy's Tale_, a superhero comic based on Tod Emko's real-life heroic (and adorable) dog Piggy. Are all-ages comics a market that appeals to you as a creator, and does a younger readership present any challenges to your storytelling?

Yes, I definitely want my work to appeal to as wide a base as possible, but there's something really great about reaching a kid's imagination. If your work becomes their favourite, it'll grow with them. I also want to create stories that'll be suitable for younger audiences, but also offer my own personal flare. While doing *A Piggy's Tale*, Tod Emko (the creator/co-writer) and I really wanted to push the idea of an all-ages story that would be entertaining, but didn't shy away from tougher subjects such as death. And we didn't want to sanitise the subject either.

As I move forward, I may return to some mature work, but for now, I do want to focus on stuff my son will be able to pick up sooner rather than later.

The Battles Of Bridget Lee: Invasion Of Farfall is available to buy now.



More comics suitable for adults and younger



Runaways (Marvel)
Brian K Vaughan, Adrian Alphona
"All young people believe their parents are evil... but what if they really are?" One of Marvel's greatest series sees the teenage offspring of supervillains team up to save themselves.



Nimona (HarperCollins)
Noelle Stevenson
What's a young shapeshifter with a knack for villainy to do? Become a sidekick to the local supervillain, of course! Nimona both helps and hinders Lord Ballister Blackheart's efforts to hilarious effect.



Oz: The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz (Marvel)
Eric Shanower, Skottie Young
We all know the story, but the talents of Marvel's most popular artist cannot be missed! For those wanting a little, ahem, more violence, try Young's *I Hate Fairyland*.



Amulet (Scholastic)
Brian K Vaughan, Adrian Alphona
For the youngest at heart, this fantasy series is both gorgeous and addictive – a modern classic of children discovering a magical world.



I Kill Giants (Image)
Joe Kelly, JM Ken Niimura
Barbara is consumed both with grief and determination to rid herself of the giants plaguing her life. An ancient Norse warhammer should do the trick, but just what is she really battling?

Details **Writer:** Brian K Vaughan **Artist:** Cliff Chiang
Publisher: Image **Price:** £11.99 **Released:** 6 December

PAPER GIRLS VOL 2

Whoah, this is heavy



Ah, time travel, a concept familiar to the comics medium, but rarely mastered. Never fear; Brian K Vaughan is here. The much-celebrated writer has penned hits from *Y: The Last Man* and *Saga* to *Lost* and the *Under The Dome* adaptation.

Saga alone could secure his position as king of the space opera, but with *Paper Girls* he turns his eye squarely back to the realm of sci-fi and the year of 1988. Paper girl Erin sets out on her Ohio town route as a flickering comet streaks through the sky. Hassled by bullies and rescued by a ragtag posse of fellow paper girls, the gang end up in the middle of a mind-melting adventure.

Strange, alien-looking men steal a prized walkie-talkie, and the girls chase them down to a distinctly alien-looking contraption in an abandoned basement. As the air begins to fill with unbearable noise, the girls exit to a world filled with flying dinosaurs, missing people and a time war between equally unintelligible peoples. Pinging through time, the gang are caught between trying to stay together and dealing with their multiple selves. And just what does that apple icon they find mean?

Erin and friends are far from the dumb protagonists who usually stumble around time-travel stories wondering what is going on. Quick to put two and two together, and using their known pop-culture touchstones, the girls recognise the truth of their situation and take it all in stride – as any group of 12-year olds would.

Chiang (*Wonder Woman*) tears into the retro feel with gusto, using bold graphics and colours to make this complex tale utterly readable even for those who are brand new to comics. The gang look utterly at home in the Eighties, from sneakers and hairstyles to their packet of smokes.

Coming across as *War Of The Worlds* meets *Stand By Me* via *Back To The Future*, the first volume is already a double winner for Best New Series at both the Eisner and Harvey awards.

Laura Sneddon

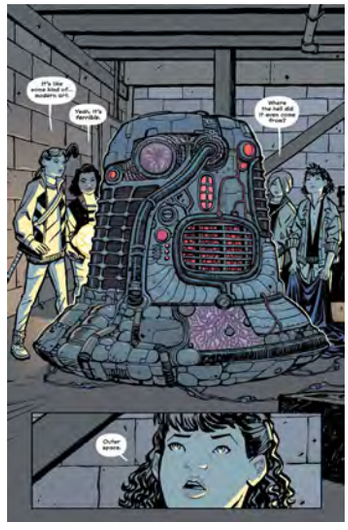
VERDICT ★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Private Eye
Brian K Vaughan, Marcos Martin, Muntsa Vicente
Vaughan taps into the paranoia of the general public.





Details **Writer:** Mike Carey **Artists:** Mike Perkins, Andy Troy
Publisher: Boom! **Price:** £14.99 **Released:** 29 December

ROWAN'S RUIN

What kind of house doesn't have salt?

Mike Carey has quite the impressive pedigree as the brains behind both *Lucifer* and *The Girl With All The Gifts*.

When Carey does something new, it's worth checking out, as is the case with this latest original horror miniseries. Teaming up with Mike Perkins (*The Stand*) and Andy Troy (*Deathlok*), *Rowan's Ruin* layers up the creep factor on an otherwise standard haunted-house affair.



American Katie fancies a new adventure and house-swaps with an English woman, moving from studio apartment to a sprawling house in the country. Her empathic powers make a sharp return as something begins to feel wrong in the creaky building, and it isn't long before supernatural manifestations begin.

The horror factor here is on point, and the characterisation is strong. A couple of actions near the very end don't quite ring true, but the art and colouring is atmospheric. An ongoing series with Katie beckons, and would be enthusiastically received.

Laura Sneddon

VERDICT ★★★★★

Details **Writer:** Simon Spurrier **Artists:** Jeff Stokely, André May
Publisher: Boom! **Price:** £22.99 **Released:** 20 December

THE SPIRE

Fear is the mind-killer

SciFiNow Must read now!

Where Dark Crystal meets *Dune* lies *The Spire*, a weird fantasy tale with political intrigue and murderous politics. The titular city sits in a deadly wasteland of various species, and hosts human rulers and the 'Sculpted' underclass, those hybrids of alien biology.



Shå, captain of the city police, attempts to find the killer of aristocrats and discover how her own history fits into the greater whole as the reader is thrust into the chaos and unrest of the city. Stokes breathlessly brings the thrown down streets and decadent tiers to life, capturing Spurrier's excellent character work.

One of the greatest British talents working in comics today, Spurrier unleashes his imagination to the fullest here and – remarkably – drives the story to a thundering conclusion. The hefty price reflects that the entire eight-issue series is collected here: double the usual trade paperback length.

It's highly recommended for the art and story alone, but the two combined result in a work China Miéville fans in particular will adore.

Laura Sneddon

VERDICT ★★★★★

Alien Battlestar Galactica Suspiria Labyrinth

MAY 1995
£1.50

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A SCIFINOW MONTHLY



THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO DAVID BOWIE: GENRE ICON

WE PAY TRIBUTE TO THE ARTIST WHO EMBODIED THE MYRIAD POSSIBILITIES OF THE GENRE

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

David Bowie meant something to all of us. His ability to shape-shift and create vivid personas and characters, meant that each of us, in a way, has our own David Bowie. It might be Major Tom, strung out in heaven's high, or Jareth the Goblin King, snatching babies and prompting awakenings. Maybe it's the gender-slipping alien Ziggy Stardust, or the fragile visitor of *The Man Who Fell To Earth*. It might be the 'ogre' that was the Thin White Duke, or the dapper figure he became in his later years.

His reach is universal, but us genre fans felt like he was ours. He was daring, unpredictable, fantastic and otherworldly. "I suppose Bowie's music taps into a similar constituency, doesn't it?" ponders biographer Nicholas Pegg. "Fans of sci-fi and horror have no hang-ups about the more ornate, intellectual end of pop music. They like a bit of baroque 'n' roll!"

Bowie's interest in science fiction and fantasy is evident from very early on in his career, and it's consistent throughout, from 'Space Oddity' through Ziggy Stardust, the glitter doom of *Diamond Dogs* and the dark worlds of 'Blackstar'.

"As a child of the Fifties, one of his favourite TV programmes was *Quatermass*, and in the Sixties he used to play a live version of 'Mars, The Bringer Of War' with one of his teenage bands as a tribute," Pegg tells us. "As a youngster he was a keen *Doctor Who* viewer as well. One of his favourite films later on was *Blade Runner*. And of course, another big one for Bowie was *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which he saw when it was released in 1968. That film had a huge impact on him, and it was an obvious influence on 'Space Oddity', which he wrote not long after seeing *2001*. It's not just the title, but the whole existential notion of a lost astronaut travelling beyond the boundaries of human experience."

His lyrics always reflected the authors, filmmakers and artists he was fascinated by, and writers have pondered the significance of the references to writers like Aleister Crowley, HP Lovecraft and Friedrich Nietzsche in songs like 'The Supermen', which features "power weird by mystics taught," a dying "supergod" and men wielding "colossal strength." 'Oh! You Pretty Things' starts innocently enough with the narrator making breakfast and coffee, but quickly takes on an apocalyptic edge. Not only are the nightmares here to stay, but "You gotta make way for the homo superior."

"Bowie was a voracious reader," explains Pegg. "He worked his way through thousands of books, and whatever he happened to be reading at the time would tend to trickle into his songwriting. Bowie was always playful with his references, but that doesn't mean he was just mucking about. He was genuinely interested in writers like Crowley and Nietzsche, and they crop up here and there in later songs too. There's more than a whiff of Crowley in 'Blackstar', isn't there?"

That voracious interest didn't just provide Bowie with a litany of references; it reflected a much greater ambition for himself as an artist, using the vast



opportunities provided by the genre to grow and experiment. "Like Kubrick, Bowie was interested in science fiction not as an end in itself, but as an arena for exploring philosophical ideas: the vastness of outer space as a metaphor for what goes on in our own inner space," enthuses Pegg.

Which brings us to Ziggy. From his first appearance in a London pub on 10 February 1972, Ziggy Stardust was something that no one had ever seen before. Bowie became the androgynous space man so completely that the artist became the art, showcasing his abilities as an actor and performer. "Bowie approached everything that he did in terms of theatre, as an actor," explains Pegg. "He wasn't the sort of artist who went on stage in a pair of jeans and told the audience what kind of a day he'd just had. His music was inherently theatrical, and the characters were there to illuminate and articulate the music."

Bowie continued to explore the apocalypse with the snarling *Diamond Dogs* in 1974, but he would reach his spaceman apotheosis in Nicolas Roeg's *The Man Who Fell To Earth*. He had acted before, but this was different. "It was the perfect role for him at that particular moment," explains Pegg. "He was in the States, touring and recording, taking too many drugs and going through any number of personal crises. Roeg was looking for someone to play that lost, alienated character, a vulnerable man dislocated from his familiar surroundings, and a Hollywood casting agent showed him the BBC documentary *Cracked Actor*, which had just been filmed. There was Thomas Jerome Newton, all dressed up and ready to go."

"I don't think there's any other actor that could have played that role," cinematographer Tony Richmond tells us. Richmond had worked with Roeg on *Walkabout* before becoming his cinematographer on *Don't Look Now*, and he tells us that there was something very ⇨

SOUND AND VISION

The best of Bowie's genre music videos

Life On Mars (1973)

Bowie's early music videos were kept pretty simple, placing him front and centre to great effect, but it never works more beautifully than here, as a nearly translucent Bowie fixes you with his stare.



Look Back In Anger (1979)

This track from *Lodger* finds Bowie playing a self-loathing artist who is confronted by his monstrous reflection while painting an angelic self-portrait. It's got snarl to spare.



Ashes To Ashes (1980)

One of the truly iconic Bowie videos, this short film may not have aged well, but it was groundbreaking at the time, and his mime character is an unforgettable creation.



I'm Afraid Of Americans (1997)

Not genre, you say? What's not horror about Bowie being chased by a furious and unrelenting Trent Reznor through the streets of New York City? That's what we thought.



The Next Day (2013)

This video provoked some predictable Catholic controversy, as Marion Cotillard's prostitute gets gory stigmata while Gary Oldman's horny priest rages at the Christ-like Bowie. It's brilliant.





The part of Thomas Jerome Newton was perfect for Bowie.

"HE WAS VERY HELPFUL… HE HAD AN ABILITY TO WEAR CLOTHES AS SOMEONE WHO WAS TRYING TO MAKE IT SO THAT HE WASN'T ALIEN, BUT HERE"

MAY ROUTH

special about watching Bowie on set. "He was just perfect. He glided through the movie, very skinny, very slim, he had that red hair, very pasty, almost translucent skin. I think as a theatregoer, just seeing the movie and watching him through the shooting of the movie, that whole thing just seemed absolutely correct."

Although it was the first leading role for Bowie, Roeg had absolute confidence in his star. "Nic directed it, but he really sort of left him alone to his own devices," remembers Richmond. "Although Bowie was very professional. He was never late, he knew his lines. He turned up, just put a jetpack on and blew through it."



Bowie understood just what the character of Jareth required.

Bowie's gift for creating unforgettable characters is legendary, but everyone we speak to enthuses about his collaborative spirit. Thomas Jerome Newton, with his red hair and pale skin, is one of the truly great Bowie characters, someone who looks almost exactly like us, but not quite. He'd keep the look for his Berlin period albums *Station To Station* and *Low*, and hairstylist Martin Samuel tells us that he was a joy to work with.

"Nic wanted me to meet David as soon as I got there to make sure that we were going to be able to get on, and we had a session," he remembers. "His people had already told me that he wanted this particular red colour that was only available in Europe – that incredible red – so I went with a bundle of that, and then we decided about the blonde. His hair was much longer, so we cut it into that look for the movie. It was a collaboration, and it was a fantastic experience, especially working with David all those months."

"He was very helpful in working with you," adds May Routh, the film's costume designer. "He had an ability to wear clothes as someone who was trying to make it so that he wasn't alien, but here. He wanted to help you."

"I was just thinking of the time he came into the wardrobe and he was wearing a pink plaid cowboy shirt, and this was 1975 New Mexico," she laughs. "And I thought, 'I wonder where he got that!' And he was wearing pink tinted glasses and with his hair… he's just so stunning looking. You just wanted to photograph him. Then he picked up a police officer's hat with a visor, and he put this on… my breath was taken away. I thought, 'That is absolutely amazing.' And he left, and I suddenly thought, 'God, that's our wardrobe, we've got to get it back!' He could do things like that; he had a look that I've never seen anyone else have. He was just an asset to all the clothes, as far as I could see."

The Man Who Fell To Earth was not an instant success, which Richmond attributes in large part to its

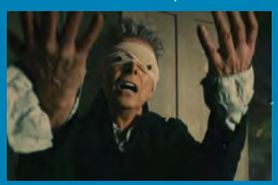
The Stars Are Out Tonight (2013)

Tilda Swinton and David Bowie together at last, as director Floria Sigismondi creates a delirious and creepy domestic nightmare. It's more exciting than anything we've got around here.

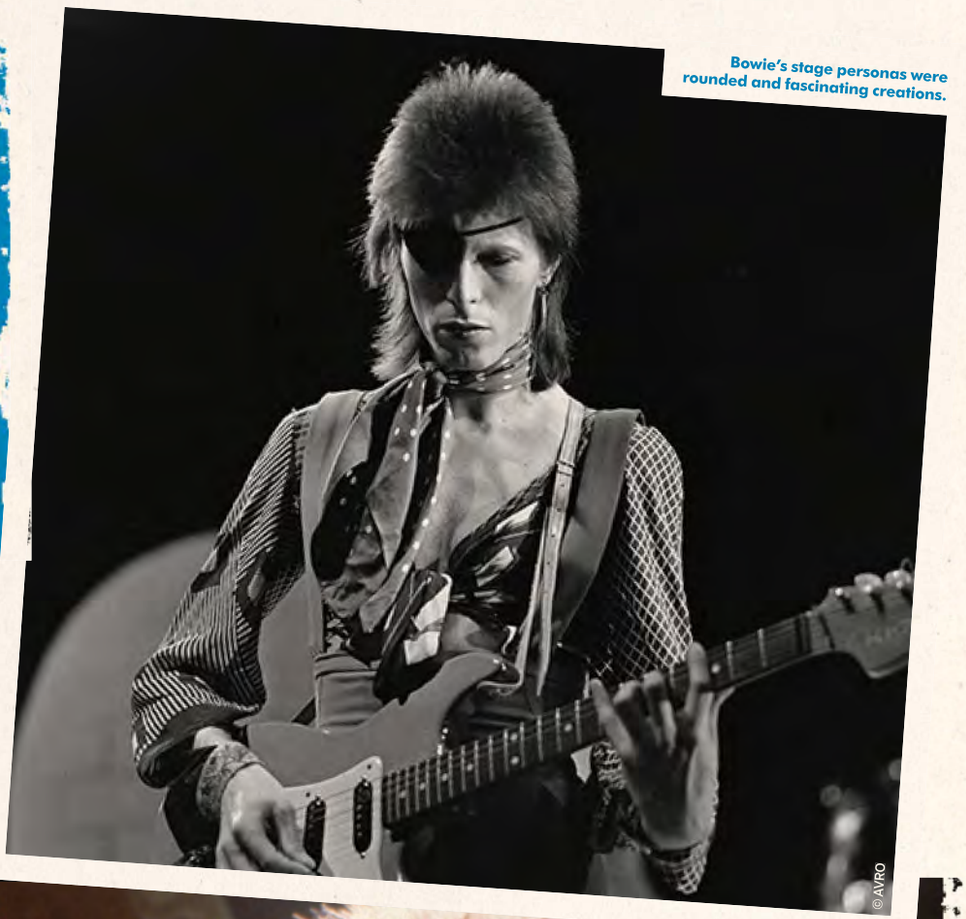


Blackstar (2016)

The 'Lazarus' video is a more emotional experience, but this first promo video from *Blackstar* announced the darkness and incredible ambition of Bowie's last album. Those button eyes…







Bowie's stage personas were rounded and fascinating creations.

© AVRO



Part dashing romantic hero, part fairy-tale villain.

COMPLETE GUIDE TO
DAVID BOWIE: GENRE ICON



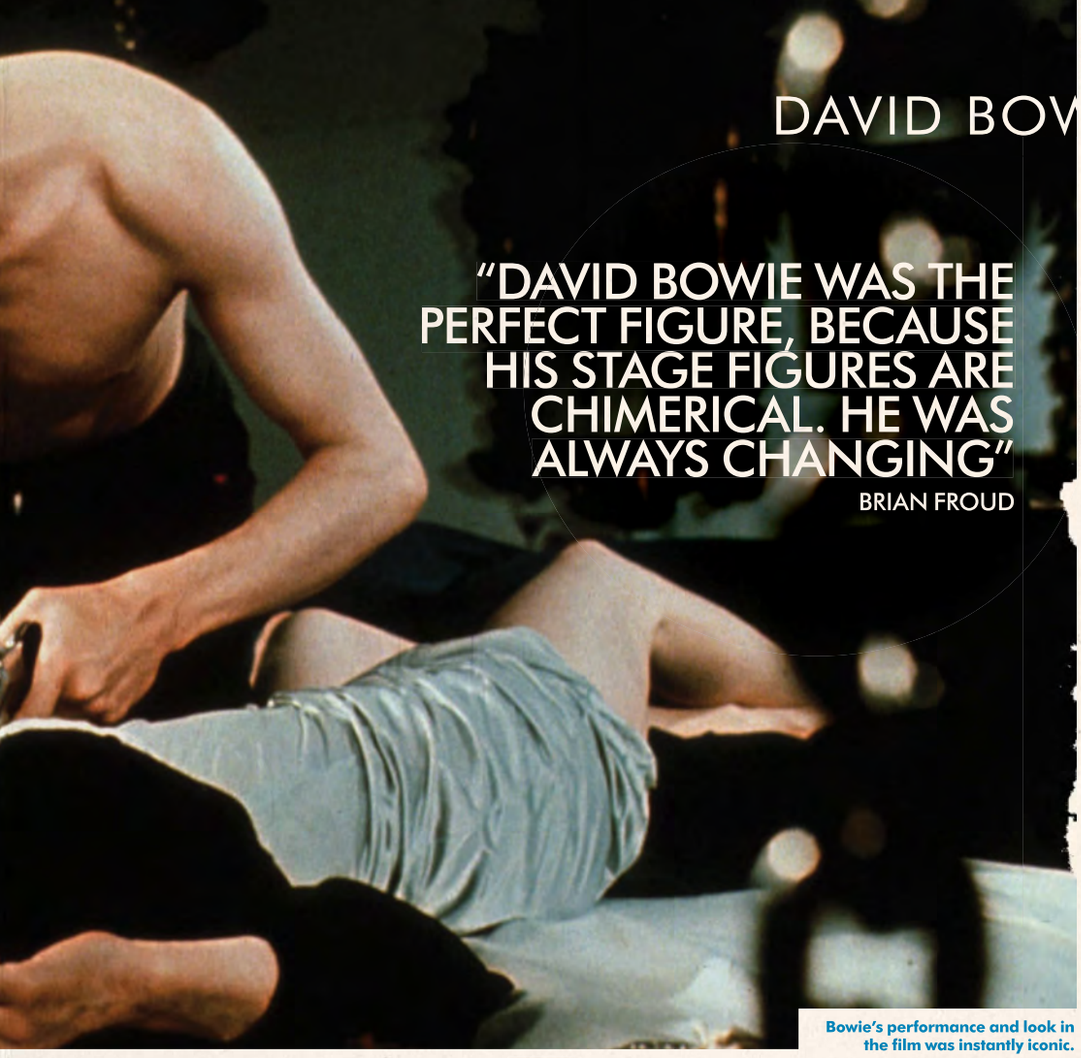


US distributor. "It was very well received in London, but it was held up for quite a while in America," he remembers. "They just absolutely butchered the movie." However, he continued to take acting roles, and returned to genre with Tony Scott's sleek Gothic 1983 vampire horror *The Hunger*.

Bowie played John Blaylock, the bloodsucking cohort of Catherine Deneuve's vampire queen Miriam, and pays the price for eternal life when he rapidly ages over the space of a few hours. He is superb in that scene; desperately trying to explain to Susan Sarandon's gerontologist that keeping him waiting is killing him. The other great sequence is the opening, as John and Miriam stalk through a nightclub while Bauhaus croon 'Bela Lugosi's Dead' for the camera. They make such an effortlessly watchable pair, and they're beautifully photographed, but Bowie never seemed to quite be happy with the film. He also starred in Nagisa Ôshima's superb *Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence* that same year, which arguably features his finest performance.



***The Man Who Fell To Earth* flopped in the US, but has only grown in stature over the years.**



"DAVID BOWIE WAS THE PERFECT FIGURE, BECAUSE HIS STAGE FIGURES ARE CHIMERICAL. HE WAS ALWAYS CHANGING"

BRIAN FROUD

Bowie's performance and look in the film was instantly iconic.



His defining turn for a generation of filmgoers would come in 1986 with Jim Henson's *Labyrinth*. Just like Thomas, trying to imagine a different actor in the role of Jareth the Goblin King, who abducts the baby brother of teenaged Sarah and forces her to pursue him into the titular fairy-tale kingdom, is absolutely pointless.

"Jim felt he wanted an iconic figure, so he was looking towards pop stars," remembers Brian Froud, *Labyrinth*'s creature and costume designer. "It's a dreamscape, something that's in the head of the girl, we wanted some power to the Goblin King. David Bowie was the perfect figure because his stage figures are chimerical; he was always changing. In my head he was a romantic figure, he was based on [*Wuthering Heights* protagonist] Heathcliff. I also wanted him to have the look of being a dangerous figure, like a leather boy. *On The Waterfront*, a medieval knight, a ballet dancer – that was where all the tight trousers came from. So I wanted him to be an amalgam of many things, and David was perfect!"

Froud's designs were the key to getting Bowie's attention. "We had a meeting in his dressing room to fit him with the wig and do the costume fittings," Froud remembers. "The workshop had made him a little bone flute as a welcome present, and when we gave it to him he totally understood what it was and what he needed to do. He leapt up on the dressing bench with all the mirrors and lights around it, and hunkered down and played this really spooky tune. He was otherworldly, he was rather scary, and I thought, 'This is wonderful, he's going to be perfect for the part!'"

Bowie was the quintessential fairy-tale villain: cruel but seductive, playful but scary. *Labyrinth* was not a commercial or critical success at the time, but Pegg tells us that Bowie wasn't dragged down by bad reviews. "I think he was confident enough to know when he'd created something of quality," he says. "*Labyrinth*'s a wonderful children's film, and Bowie is brilliant in it. But it's not *Station To Station*, and some of the negative reaction at the time came specifically from rock fans and critics who struggled to fit *Labyrinth* into their narrow idea of what a respectable rock star ought to be doing. 'This is the genius who made the Berlin trilogy. What's he up to now, wearing a silly wig and dancing with Muppets?' Well, he's starring in one of the best children's fantasy movies of its day, that's what!"

Bowie would continue to make fascinating acting choices, jumping from Jareth to Pontius Pilate in Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation Of Christ*. The quality of the films would vary, but he had two great roles to come: as the raving Philip Jeffries in 1992's *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*, and Nikola Tesla in 2006's *The Prestige*. "In terms of playing a proper, sizeable role, *The Prestige* was the last major film he did," Pegg tells us. "It's a great performance, and he steals every scene. He was recovering from health problems, so it's understandable that he was slowing down his work rate. Otherwise, I don't think his choices of role were changing – he was simply accepting the projects that interested him the most, just as he always had done."

MAKING THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH

Behind the scenes of Nicolas Roeg's sci-fi classic

As his former assistant and cinematographer on *Don't Look Now*, Tony Richmond's relationship with director Nicolas Roeg was already established when he was brought on to *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, and he tells us that the film came together quite suddenly. "It all happened very quickly," he tells us. "I suddenly got a call, and I was jumping on a plane to Los Angeles."

What was it like shooting out in New Mexico?
It's an incredible state. The topography of the trees and the ground and the desert changes very quickly. You could be in the desert and go 80 miles up the road, and you're in some sort of forest somewhere. It's an extraordinary place with incredible skies – it just seemed to fit the movie visually. I think we were the first people who were allowed to shoot on the White Sands missile range. We couldn't take vehicles in, so everything had to be pulled in by horse and sled. I think the British guys were all in awe of this magnificent countryside.

You also worked with Nicolas Roeg on *Don't Look Now*, *Walkabout*, *Bad Timing* and more. What makes him such a special director?
He's one of the more organic directors. He knows what he wants, but he's very open to suggestions. He allows the actors to bring whatever they feel to it and he chooses whether to go his way or their way, but he's very organic. He doesn't really do storyboards, and he doesn't really do shot lists. Nic and I might talk about how we're going to do shots and write them down on a bit of paper, but they're guides. Things change from day to day, a lot of directors get locked in, and I think it's the kiss of death. To work with a director like Nic is wonderful.

Was there much interference with the creative side, or were you free to do what you wanted?
Well, the producers were Michael Deeley and Barry Spikings. It was my first time working with Michael, and he was an absolutely incredible producer. It was a very tight budget – it was a very low-budget movie, even by those standards in those days. Michael was a wonderful, really helpful producer, especially for Nic. He gave us everything we wanted, and it was just wonderful.

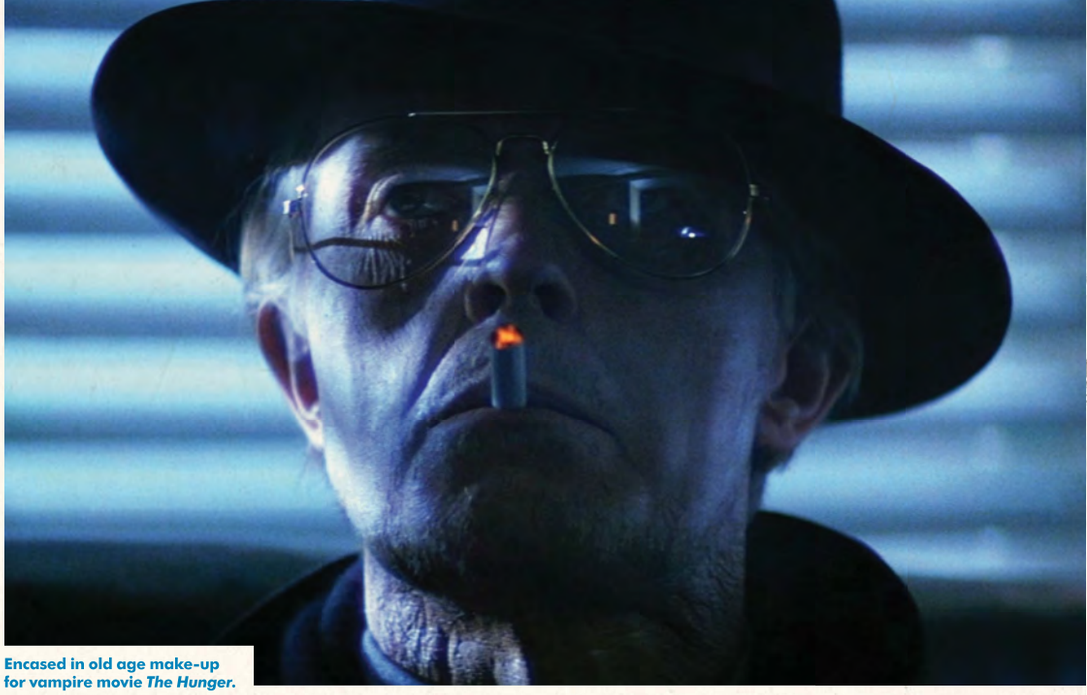
Did you know that you were working on something special?
Yes, but I didn't know what. Just the iconic images we had and the way they were all put together, yeah, I thought we were doing something really incredible, but until you see the finished film you don't really know that. This restoration is really fantastic. When I approved the 4K restoration and did the final colour tweaks, I pulled it back much more in line with the original movie print, as opposed to just tweaking it for a good-looking Blu-ray. I think it's fantastic; I'm very, very pleased with it.

He was certainly never short of offers; Bryan Fuller openly pursued Bowie to play Dr Lecter's uncle in *Hannibal*, and James Gunn offered him a role in *Guardians Of The Galaxy: Vol 2*. While his refusal of both of these might be attributed to his worsening health, it's interesting to note that Bowie's film choices don't fit a pattern. There are roles that feel written for him, then there are the others, like his turn as Andy Warhol in Julian Schnabel's *Basquiat*.

"I don't think he went for roles that suited a preordained 'image', although of course the offers that tended to come his way were often aliens or villains or supernatural beings, because that was how so many casting directors perceived Bowie," Pegg says. "The film industry saw him as a go-to guy for aliens and weirdos, and that suited Bowie quite nicely, because he was always more interested in 'outsider' characters, people stranded on the fringes of human society looking in, like Baal or the Elephant Man or Jack Celliers in *Mr Lawrence*. He had a low boredom threshold, and it had to be something that really excited him."

The idea of filmmakers trying to fit roles to him is understandable. Bowie brought something special with his mere presence, no matter what the medium, and the legions of artists and creators who have been inspired by his work and by his approach to it are a testament to that. "Bowie was well aware of how influential he was," explains Pegg. "He always paid generous homage to his own influences. In turn, that meant he absolutely understood what a big deal it was for the musicians he'd influenced when he worked with them. He was forever championing the artists who came after him, and he loved collaborating with people like Arcade Fire, the Dandy Warhols, Nine Inch Nails and countless others."

With that adoration, love and respect, it can be easy to allow Bowie to drift off onto some kind of lofty pedestal at a god-like remove. "When he died it was very shocking, but when everybody was saying what he was like, I thought, 'Nobody's really saying this one thing,'" Brian Froud tells us. "Because Toby the baby was our child, Wendy [Froud, Brian's wife and creature workshop artist on *Labyrinth*] was there on set with Toby and David, and he was very nice. Our experience with him was that he laughed a lot, that he was funny."



Encased in old age make-up for vampire movie *The Hunger*.

"HE WAS FOREVER CHAMPIONING THE ARTISTS WHO CAME AFTER HIM, AND HE LOVED COLLABORATING WITH PEOPLE LIKE ARCADE FIRE AND NINE INCH NAILS"

NICHOLAS PEGG

"He was always wary of that status as some kind of guru," Pegg concludes. "He never wanted to be anyone's leader. He was too much of an individualist, and he wanted others to be individuals too. There's a great line in 'Teenage Wildlife', a song from *Scary Monsters*, where he addresses this very thing. "You'll take me aside and say, 'David, what shall I do? They wait for me in the hallway.' I'll say, 'Don't ask me, I don't know any hallways.'" And just this year, [*TV On The Radio*'s Dave Sitek] recalled the only piece of career advice that Bowie ever gave him: 'Stay strange.' That's David Bowie."

The Complete David Bowie (Revised And Updated 2016 Edition) by Nicholas Pegg is out now from Titan Books. *The Man Who Fell To Earth* is out now on Blu-ray, distributed by StudioCanal. The *Labyrinth* 30th anniversary steelbook is out now, along with an all-new DVD and Amazon Exclusive Digibook. Jim Henson's *Labyrinth The Ultimate Visual History* is available to buy now.



Bowie's last major film role was as Nikola Tesla in *The Prestige*.

TOP 10 DAVID BOWIE INFLUENCES ON

1) LUCIFER IN THE SANDMAN/LUCIFER

Neil Gaiman and artist Sam Kieth's vision of the Prince of Darkness was directly inspired by Bowie, as his blonde, angelic features can turn cruel so quickly. At first it's superficial, but as the series progresses, the likeness deepens.



2) DR MANHATTAN IN WATCHMEN

The idea of a being struggling to connect with humanity while being kept as a combination of deity and prisoner feels indebted to *The Man Who Fell To Earth*'s Thomas Jerome Newton, and there are visual parallels with Ozymandias.



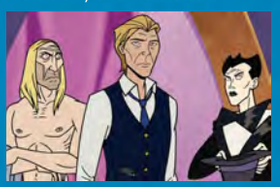
3) THE JOKER

Grant Morrison has made no secret of his love for Bowie, and he brought lots of Berlin-period eeriness to his take on Batman's greatest foe: stylish, gleeful showman the Thin White Duke Of Death in *Batman: RIP*. Frank Miller also looked to Bowie for his Joker in *The Dark Knight Returns*.



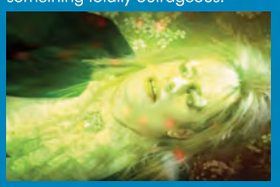
4) DAVID BOWIE IN THE VENTURE BROS

Bowie, the leader of The Guild Of Calamitous Intent, is accompanied by his bodyguards Iggy Pop and Klaus Nomi. If you need someone to give away a bride or shapeshift his way through an ass-kicking then there's only one man to call.



5) NOT JEMAINE IN FLIGHT OF THE CONCHORD

When Brett has a crisis of confidence, David Bowie (not Jemaine) drops in to give him various pieces of advice, ranging from "get an eye-patch" to "do something totally outrageous."



POP CULTURE

6) LUCI IN WICKED + THE DIVINE

Kieron Gillen is a huge Bowie fan, and he and artist Jamie McElvie made their callous rock star deity Luci(fer) as close to Bowie as they could get without calling her David Bowie. See also: superhero Noh-Varr in *Young Avengers*.



7) TILDA SWINTON IN LIFE

Swinton has spoken about how important Bowie was to her growing up, although their joint appearance in Bowie's 'The Stars Are Out Tonight' video dispelled rumours that they are the same person.



8) LIFE ON MARS

The BBC series owed a huge debt to Bowie, as the presence of his music made sure the air of genre was maintained even when John Simm and Philip Glenister were doing wise-cracking police business. His 'Ashes To Ashes' character was used in the spin-off of the same name.



9) CASTOR/ZUSE IN TRON: LEGACY

Michael Sheen made a conscious choice to play the nightclub-owning programme as *Aladdin Sane*-era David Bowie, and it works beautifully. "Change the scheme, alter the mood! Electrify the boys and girls if you would be so kind!"



10) LAZARUS

Bowie finished working on this stage musical shortly before he died, and it features original songs as well as numbers from *Blackstar* and classic albums. With the show just beginning its London run, it's the final piece of work of an artist whose lustre will never fade.



INTERVIEW

ROGER CHRISTIAN ON STAR WARS, ALIEN AND MORE

FROM DESIGNING THE USED UNIVERSE OF STAR WARS TO CRAFTING THE INTENSELY CLAUSTROPHOBIC ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALIEN AND NOW TURNING HIS OWN FANTASY VISION INTO A FEATURE FILM, WE TALK TO SET DECORATOR-TURNED-DIRECTOR ROGER CHRISTIAN ABOUT HIS EXTRAORDINARY ABILITY TO BUILD WORLDS…

WORDS **OLIVER PFEIFFER**

Having worked behind the scenes on sci-fi classics like *Star Wars* and *Alien*, Roger Christian has left his mark on the genre, helping bring to life some of the staples of the genre. We spoke to him about his early career, his new book *Cinema Alchemist*, and whether we'll ever see that *Black Angel* movie…

As the set decorator on *Star Wars*, you really got behind the universe that George Lucas envisioned. Yet reading *Cinema Alchemist*, there were some real prejudices toward that…
From the very beginning George said, "I don't want anything designed: it has to look used and natural," which is how I wanted science fiction films to be made too. That kind of down-and-dirty look was so alien to most of the crew, who thought, "Well, it's science fiction, it's *Flash Gordon* – you have to have all these amazing sets and weird costumes." They just couldn't understand.

[Production designer] John Barry, myself and [art director] Leslie Dilley had the privilege of spending four months with George in a studio in London trying to work out how to make his movie, so we knew George's vision. There were prejudices from the word go. Up until that time, science fiction had been pretty poorly made on the big screen, so there was no reverence for it.

You also built Luke's iconic lightsaber.
There have been numerous false claims to who created it, but as set decorator I was personally in charge of creating all the dressings and weapons, and supervised their making. I made the prototypes of almost all the weapons, usually by adapting found objects to fit George's vision.

The lightsaber had to be something special, but believable too. I eventually found these silver tube-like objects with red buttons in the handles in a dusty cardboard box at a camera-hire shop in London. It was uncanny: they resembled Ralph McQuarrie's paintings of the saber. They were in fact three-cell flashgun handles, and they were the perfect weight and size. Then I went back to the studio and made various alterations to make it look more weapon-like. When George saw it, he held it in his hands and smiled: we had found what became the iconic image of *Star Wars*.

You also helped to create R2-D2 and C-3PO, who were integral, as they had to be convincing as main characters.
All of us realised that if George didn't have robots who were the storytellers then he didn't have a movie. We knew C-3PO could be made because of *Metropolis*, and if we found the right actor it was possible. I added dents and scratches to add character and a past history – before this, robots in film looked brand new.

In Ralph McQuarrie's paintings, R2-D2 was no bigger than four feet. Radio control at the time was primitive, so the only way to do this was to have a very small person inside to make it work. So once Kenny Baker was found – who had the frame and stamina for it – we knew it would work. We eventually got R2-D2 to shuffle along, and George saw this and smiled. We knew then that we had a movie.

Much later, you returned to *Star Wars* as a second unit director on both *Return Of The Jedi* and *The Phantom Menace*. Why do you feel the prequel wasn't so strongly embraced?
I think *Star Wars* fans wanted what JJ Abrams did with *The Force Awakens* – they wanted that first film



© Roger Christian

Roger Christian spent his early career working behind the scenes on sci-fi classics *Star Wars* and *Alien*.



"THE LIGHTSABER HAD TO BE SOMETHING SPECIAL, BUT BELIEVABLE, TOO"

ROGER CHRISTIAN

© Getty



"RIDLEY SCOTT WANTED THE ACTORS TO BE NERVOUS AND ISOLATED"
ROGER CHRISTIAN

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During his time on *Alien*, Christian gave instructions to Sigourney Weaver (below right).

again, and that kind of feel that came with it. George had discovered they could do robots and huge armies fighting.

When you look at *Phantom Menace* in terms of innovation of cinema, it's a huge leap forward, especially with the CGI character of Watto. George always maintained that he made his films for 9-12 year olds, and it wasn't his fault adults liked them. Having someone as young as Jake Lloyd (Anakin Skywalker) in the lead didn't go down very well with adults.

Ridley Scott liked that worn-aesthetic look you used for the Millennium Falcon, which resulted in you utilising the same technique for the Nostromo as art director on *Alien*.

Ridley said, "It's a space truck – I need that look!" He had to screen-test Sigourney Weaver because 20th Century Fox wanted a star, but Ridley said, "I've found the actor, she's so good and I need her," so they said, "Alright, we'll screen-test her and take a look."

Ridley wisely didn't want to do the usual screen test with a white wall and a plant, with the actor standing there doing their lines. So he said to me, "Can you build me a piece of the Nostromo corridor, and I'll put her in action?" I quickly got a lot of scrap, pipes, etc brought in, and built the corridor for him – it's there in that screen test that you can see the beginnings of *Alien*. We later decided, after looking at the rushes, to remove the windows to heighten that claustrophobia.

You also mention that Sigourney Weaver asked for your advice regarding her performance. What did you say to her?

Ridley wasn't giving the actors many instructions, as he wanted them to be a bit nervous and isolated, so Sigourney would come to me. I became the standby art director, which is a job where you're on the floor next to the director fixing everything during a shooting day. So I was on set the entire time during the shoot, and she just got my trust. I always said, "You look great Sigourney – you're already looking like someone who could be in command of that ship, you've got that strength to you. Just be yourself!"

What was it like working with HR Giger, who conceived that extraordinary alien aesthetic?

He never really believed in movies, and I think he didn't really believe in this one until he came and saw what we were doing. He was supposed to come for two weeks, but ended up staying for the entire shoot. [Production designer] Michael Seymour built him a structure on one of the stages, and I filled it with bone.



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Roger Christian's *Black Angel* shoot influenced John Boorman's *Excalibur*.

ROGER CHRISTIAN'S BIGGEST CONTRIBUTIONS TO STAR WARS



BUILDING THE LIGHTSABER

1 Despite others later taking credit for it, Christian in fact built the iconic lightsaber handed to Luke by Obi-Wan in *A New Hope*.



CONSTRUCTING THE MILLENNIUM FALCON

2 Christian built the Falcon from a miniature model reference, then dressed the interior of the iconic ship from discarded aircraft scrap parts to give it that lived-in look. He won an Oscar for his set-decoration efforts.



BUILDING R2-D2

3 Christian used a discarded lamp top and aircraft nozzles to help personalise the famous pint-sized droid, who was first visualised in Ralph McQuarrie's conceptual painting.



Despite being panned upon release, *Battlefield Earth* has found love in some quarters.

Giger sculpted the alien planet in miniature using those bones. I got him a lot of modelling clay, and he was just very quiet and dedicated. I was very reverent to his art, as it was amazing. He sculpted all the time, and when the stage was built he would go in with airbrushes, and sculpt and spray the paint and everything. Giger was really involved in that world.

Next you directed *Black Angel*, which was a short film specially commissioned to screen alongside *The Empire Strikes Back*...
I wrote it as a kind of medieval myth. Basically, I was trying to be Akira Kurosawa, and I wanted to create that drama in the landscape in Scotland like he had with Mount Fuji. No one had ever shot Scotland before and this beauty that existed there. Ridley was doing the sound mixing on *Alien*, so I came in and watched the process.

One day, the head at Fox came in and asked what I was doing. I told him I'd written this script, and that it was a medieval myth. I sent it to him, and the next morning he said, "Do you mind if I send this to George Lucas?" Apparently, George didn't like the short film they had put with *Empire Strikes Back*. Literally two days later, I got the call to make *Black Angel*, and the way I wanted it. They gave me all the short ends of film left over from *Empire*, and I had a crew of nine people, four actors and two horses, and went to Scotland. I had this huge idea of an epic, but I had to condense and make a more esoteric version of it that appealed to the subconscious. It got a huge reaction from audiences everywhere – they loved it!

John Boorman loved it too, and the look of it influenced his 1981 movie, *Excalibur*...
Yes – we were there when he screened *Black Angel* at Shepperton to his crew. Afterwards he said, "Guys that's what I want for *Excalibur*!" We were really embarrassed, because we made it with no money and only got into these spectacular locations because of our tiny crew. I was honoured, as I was a fan, and he was a huge support to me when I was trying to break through.

You're now turning *Black Angel* into a feature. Tell us about that.
My original short only follows the characters of Sir Maddox, a Black Angel, a maiden and one other character. I kept it very contained, and I maintain that on this one. I can't outdo *The Lord Of The Rings*, which did armies fighting better than anyone. It's interesting, as I've written it very much like the first *Star Wars*, where you have a small group of characters you're really engaged with. That's where the secret lies to connecting with your audience.

We've kept it independent so we can go out and make a really down-and-dirty film. My fights are one-on-one and they are huge – these are fights where death is the only outcome. In a way, this is my passion project for life; this is what I've always wanted to make.

Your first directorial feature, the chilling 1982 horror *The Sender*, wasn't a financial hit, but has really been embraced by filmmakers...
Yes, both Guillermo del Toro and George Miller have told me they love it, and it has become a kind of cult classic. It almost killed my career because the studios dumped it. I was getting huge reviews and praise from audiences, and on the other hand the studio was killing me!

[Quentin] Tarantino loves it too. He told me how, when he was working in the video store, he used to take people to the cinema in LA every night to see *The Sender*, because he realised the studio wasn't behind it. He said he recorded the television version, and then when they got it in as a rental he realised they'd cut some scenes out. He was so angry with this that he went to a video-editing suite at his own expense and cut back in from his television version my original scenes!

Upon Lucas's advice, John Travolta asked you to direct the infamous *Battlefield Earth*. What were your intentions for that film, and do you have any regrets about it?
Well, I took it on knowing that it would be a bit of a war. L Ron Hubbard had written the book, which was a science fiction classic. However, there's nothing in that book that relates to scientology at all. The director-of-photography and I said, "Let's do this like a kind of graphic novel." We wanted to do it more pulp science fiction-style, which is why we 'dutched' the camera.

I didn't have a lot of money for that film. In truth, we only had $21 million of an $80 million budget. Tarantino came to the premiere and said, "This is the stuff I really want to write, [but] I can't do it." He said, "Forget this film for about 20 years… it's going to become a classic – you watch, one day it'll get revalued, it's just because of the scientology that you're gonna get lambasted."

What would you like your legacy to be?
Obviously I'm immensely proud of *Star Wars*. What Joseph Campbell said is right: there's only one true living mythmaker today, and that's George Lucas. I think George gave the world a new Excalibur and King Arthur; ancient legends, which people always connect to. With *Star Wars*, he gave cinema a new legend for everybody to believe in. I'm hoping that *Black Angel* and the seeds of what we've got in store from those humble beginnings will be the seeds of my world. It's my passion, where I come from and what I grew up with. I want to create a whole world around *Black Angel*.

Cinema Alchemist: Designing Star Wars & Alien is out now, published by Titan.





© Joey Gannon



He enjoyed his time working on *Star Wars* with George Lucas (above).



SHOOTING R2-D2 AND C3PO'S INTRO

4 Christian was responsible for shooting the first meeting between the droids in *The Phantom Menace*. He says the line: "What? My parts are showing!" was penned by Carrie Fisher.

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

DARIO ARGENTO'S MASTERPIECE IS STILL ONE OF THE MOST VIVID AND BEAUTIFUL ON-SCREEN NIGHTMARES WE'VE EVER SEEN. LET'S JOIN SUZY BANNION AND TRAVEL TO THE PRESTIGIOUS DANCE ACADEMY WITH A TERRIBLE SECRET…

TimeWarp Retro Classic Film



SUSPIRIA

Film

RUNNING TIME:
93 minutes
RELEASE DATE:
28 July 1977
DIRECTOR:
Dario Argento
WRITERS:
Dario Argento, Daria Nicolodi
CAST:
Jessica Harper, Stefania Casini, Barbara Magnolfi, Alida Valli, Joan Bennett, Udo Kier

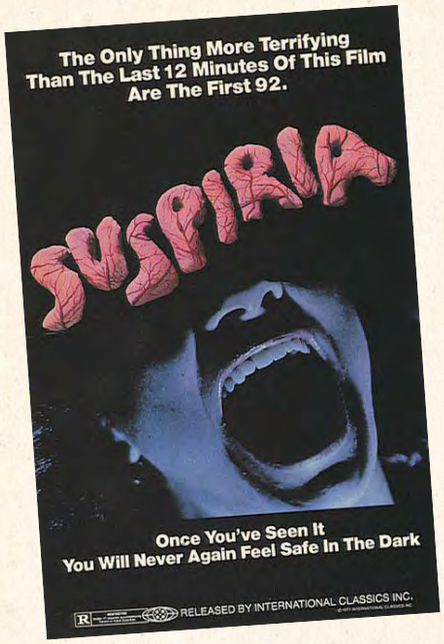
About

Suzy Bannion, an American dance student, travels to Germany to attend the celebrated dance academy in Freiburg. On the night that she arrives, she witnesses a student fleeing from the school in a state of distress, and later hears that the girl has vanished. Not long after her arrival, Suzy becomes ill and is moved into the dorms at the academy, where she'll soon realise that there's more to the place than dance. Do you know anything about… witches?

Horror isn't a genre in which you can easily disguise your influences. If you make a body horror, everyone's going to point to David Cronenberg. Supernatural slasher? Wes Craven. Hungry rednecks? Tobe Hooper. Meanwhile, we can barely move for synth-scored, doom-laden John Carpenter homages/rip-offs.

However, Dario Argento is a little harder to pin down. Sure, there are plenty of filmmakers who use elements of his style (Nicolas Winding Refn may be the most high-profile devotee, although he's probably more indebted to Mario Bava), but you don't see that many direct Argento pastiches, and you have to imagine the reason why is because it's really bloody difficult to get right.

Suspiria, his masterpiece, is a stunning collision of classical fairy tale and gruesome slasher, a movie with incredibly colourful visuals and an eardrum-bursting Goblin soundtrack. It's beautiful, disgusting, sinister and loud, a mystery powered by dream logic. It truly is unique.



The atmosphere is fully immersive from the very start as Goblin's score kicks in over the opening credits, accompanied by that iconic voiceover (the only instance of it in the film). "Suzy Bannion decided to perfect her ballet studies in the most famous school of dance in Europe. She chose the celebrated academy of Freiburg. One day, at 9am, she left Kennedy airport, New York, and arrived in Germany at 10.40pm local time." The airport doors open with a hiss so aggressive that they sound like they want to eat her (Argento even shows the spikes of the mechanism sliding into place), and she steps through this automated mouth and into the waiting jaws of the night. We don't see Suzy in her life in America; we meet her as she walks into this Grimm's fairy tale landscape and the taxi of a grunting man, who barely responds to her questions about the storm.

We immediately share the disorientation that Suzy feels. As she unsuccessfully tries to gain entry to the school, she catches a glimpse of a student fleeing, seemingly for her life. For the next few minutes, we abandon Suzy and follow this girl, Pat Hingle (Eva Axén), instead as she arrives at an insanely beautiful apartment building, where she takes the elevator up a couple of floors and arrives at her friend's place. Left alone for a moment, Pat moves to the window, seemingly drawn by the cacophony caused by the storm outside. She moves closer, and suddenly a pair of glowing yellow eyes appear in the darkness. It's a fantastic jump scare that's followed by some protracted bloody chaos as only Argento in his prime could orchestrate: broken glass, elaborate murder and images that range from oddly beautiful to truly gruesome. If the film didn't already have your attention, it certainly does at this point.

Once we're back in the Tanz Akademie, we're back on surer footing and Argento takes a breath. There's even some light comedy to be found in the barbed comments the students throw at each other ("I once read that names which begin with the letter 'S' are the names of snakes!") and the unreadable grinning intensity of the great Alida Valli's (*Eyes Without A Face*) instructor/drill sergeant Miss Tanner, who tells Suzy all about manservant Pavlo's (Giuseppe Transocchi) new teeth. "He's really ugly, isn't he?" she grins. There's even the presence of a bona fide Hollywood veteran to put us at ease, as Joan Bennett (who'd gone from films like *Father Of The Bride* and *Scarlet Street* to the popular horror soap *Dark Shadows*) plays the school's vice-director Madame Blanc with an air of faintly disinterested menace.

There's a rich tradition of ballet and boarding schools in Gothic and fairy tales, but Argento isn't interested in giving us anything that resembles any kind of institution or crumbling Gothic building that we've seen before. The dream-logic doesn't let us get a handle on the building's geography, even though poor Sarah's deductions are based on following the footsteps she hears in the night to a hidden location. Her death late in the film shows an absolute betrayal of reason, and features one of the film's best shocks, as she climbs through a small window and steps into the next room, only to plunge several feet into a seemingly endless mess of razor wire.

Argento also ensures that the setting remains alien to us through his incredible use of colour. He and cinematographer Luciano Tovoli nearly drown the film in

"SUSPIRIA IS A STUNNING COLLISION OF CLASSICAL FAIRY TALE AND GRUESOME SLASHER"



Red lighting, pouring rain, Goblin soundtrack – what an opening.





The first horror sequence of *Suspiria* is unforgettable.

CLASSIC QUOTES

"BAD LUCK ISN'T BROUGHT BY BROKEN MIRRORS, BUT BY BROKEN MINDS"
DR FRANK MANDEL

"I HAD NO IDEA YOU WERE SO STRONG WILLED. I CAN SEE THAT ONCE YOU MAKE UP YOUR MIND ABOUT SOMETHING, NOTHING WILL CHANGE IT FOR YOU. MY COMPLIMENTS"
MISS TANNER

"YOU WANTED TO KILL HELENA MARKOS! HELL IS BEHIND THAT DOOR! YOU'RE GOING TO MEET DEATH NOW... THE LIVING DEAD!"
HELENA MARKOS

"SUSIE... SARAH... I ONCE READ THAT NAMES WHICH BEGIN WITH THE LETTER 'S' ARE THE NAMES OF SNAKES! SSSSS! SSSSSS!"
OLGA

"SUZY, DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT... WITCHES?"
SARAH

"SUZY BANNION DECIDED TO PERFECT HER BALLET STUDIES IN THE MOST FAMOUS SCHOOL OF DANCE IN EUROPE. SHE CHOSE THE CELEBRATED ACADEMY OF FREIBURG. ONE DAY, AT NINE IN THE MORNING, SHE LEFT KENNEDY AIRPORT, NEW YORK, AND ARRIVED IN GERMANY AT 10:40PM LOCAL TIME"
NARRATOR

"THE ONLY THING MORE TERRIFYING THAN THE LAST 12 MINUTES OF THIS FILM ARE THE FIRST 92"

RETRO CLASSIC
SUSPIRIA



Udo Kier makes an early (if dubbed) appearance.



***Suspiria* is beautifully shot, but also brutally gruesome.**

these amazing vivid reds, blues, greens and yellows, as loud and as heightened as Goblin's soundtrack, which is a masterpiece all of its own – a blend of raucous noise and eerie chimes. Goblin collaborated with Argento on *Profondo Rosso*, *Tenebrae*, *Phenomena* and *Sleepless*, but we'd argue that *Suspiria* remains their pinnacle.

Despite having the most fantastical elements of any Argento film at that time, it's still rooted in his love of Alfred Hitchcock. There's the conspiracy to get Suzy into the school and under the weather with her drugged food (including that lurid red wine) and our heroine slowly realising that she is at the centre of some awful plot. Suzy's brief excursion out of the academy to go and talk to Sara's uncle Dr Mandel (an early dubbed role for Udo Kier) and Professor Milius (Rudolf Schundler) feels like something that's almost from another movie as we settle in for a good ten minutes worth of exposition. It's here that we get the skinny on Helena Markos, as well as some conflicting advice on the probability of the supernatural (the dance academy was founded by a witch, but remember, "Bad luck isn't brought by broken mirrors, but by broken minds").

This short dabbling with common sense immediately precedes the film's finale, as Suzy probes the depths of the school to discover that the entire staff is talking about murdering her. At this point the script reaches the same fever pitch as Goblin's music and the cinematographer, as Madame Blanc shrieks, "We must get rid of that bitch of an American girl. Vanish! She must vanish! Make her disappear! Understand? Vanish, she must vanish. She must die! Die! Die! Helena, give me power. Sickness! Sickness! Away with her! Away with trouble. Death, death, death!"

The American trailer for *Suspiria* pledges that "The only thing more terrifying than the last 12 minutes of this film are the first 92," and this wonderful nonsense is kind of true. The real terror as Suzy remembers how to breach the school's inner sanctum and the bedroom of the fiendish Helena Markos is the idea that anything can happen. We've established that real-world rules no longer apply, but as the cackling witch reanimates the grisly corpse of Sara to attack her old friend, Suzy somehow applies logic to the problem and identifies the outline of the old hag, stabbing her through the neck. With the witch dead, the staff collapse screaming and Suzy





WITCHING HOUR

5 of the greatest cinematic covens

THE WITCHES (1990)



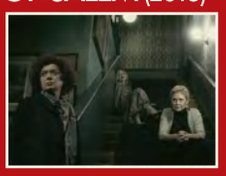
1 Anjelica Huston's band of monsters terrified a generation. They're not the Royal Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty To Children

THE CRAFT (1996)



2 "We are the weirdos, mister." These four students are capable of incredible things, but infighting might tear their coven apart.

THE LORDS OF SALEM (2013)



3 Judy Geeson, Dee Wallace and Patricia Quinn guide Sheri Moon to her destiny in this flawed chiller.



flees as the school crumbles around her. The final moments, as she exits the film laughing in the rain and the words, 'You have been watching *Suspiria*' appear, seem to acknowledge how insane the whole experience has been.

Indeed, a sense of glee can be felt throughout the film, whether it's in the misdirection of scenes like the brutal death of fired piano instructor Albert (Jacopo Mariani) at the hands of his guide dog, or the maggots pouring from the ceiling onto the screaming faces of the academy students. *Suspiria*'s madness is carefully constructed, but it's playful, too.

Argento followed *Suspiria* with sequel *Inferno*, which brought the action to New York. It's wonderful in many ways, but you'd be hard pushed to argue that it matches the heights of its predecessor. By the time he got round to finishing the *Three Mothers* trilogy with *Mother Of Tears*, he was past his prime, and the result is a film that's only really entertaining for how daft it is. But *Suspiria* remains a classic, and as much as we love Luca Guadagnino and Tilda Swinton, the remake has a lot to live up to.

Suspiria is out on DVD and Blu-ray now, distributed by Nouveaux.

WATCH FIRST



ROSEMARY'S BABY (1968)
Poor Mia Farrow discovers that everyone in her life has horrible plans for her in Roman Polanski's classic.

WATCH NEXT



PHENOMENA (1985)
Jennifer Connelly controls insects and Donald Pleasence's chimp has a straight razor in Argento's daft but hugely fun horror.

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"Stone cold classic, peak Argento, creepiest soundtrack ever." **@HannahChapter1**



"The quintessential psychological landscape to the sublime terror." **@SharrelWright**



"What's to tell? One of the best movies ever made, outside any genre thinking." **@InterFilmreisen**



"Every time I watch it, I notice some new wrinkle that adds to its already unmatched cinematic smorgasbord. Needs more fans!" **@teenmethuselah**



"Fantastic film, first horror I watched." **@Carollco**



"An amazing piece of art, with unforgettable scenes. An essay about colours in a horror movie."**@RogerioSaladino**



The set design and lighting in the film is stunning.



Anyone who gets close to the truth meets a grisly end.

THE CITY OF THE DEAD (1960)



4 History student Nan Barlow discovers that the spirit of a burned witch and her coven is alive and well in Whitewood in this underrated classic.

HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH (1982)



5 Dan O'Herlihy's toy tycoon masterplan involves fragments of Stonehenge, kids' masks and a deadly advert.

INTERVIEW

TRICIA HELFER



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INTERVIEW

TRICIA HELFER

THE BATTLESTAR GALACTICA STAR REFLECTS ON HER TV CAREER, AS WELL AS TALKING US THROUGH THAT UNFORGETTABLE ENDING, LOOKING BACK AT HER OTHER HITS AND BEING AN OUT-AND-PROUD CAT LADY…

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**

Having become synonymous with the genre thanks to her various roles in Ronald D Moore's *Battlestar Galactica* revamp – playing Number Six, Caprica and Natalie Faust among numerous others – it's easy to forget how many other shows Tricia Helfer has starred in, having also featured in the likes of *Supernatural*, *Chuck*, *Ascension*, *Falling Skies* and *Powers*, among numerous others. Currently appearing in *Lucifer*, we looked back with Helfer at her TV career past, present and future…

You have become a regular fixture in sci-fi and fantasy TV. What is it that keeps you coming back to the genre?
Good stories! [laughs] It's not about purposefully seeking out the sci-fi genre at all. For me, it's about finding projects and characters that I like playing and think I can do something with, and working with a team of people that I want to work with. I think with *Battlestar Galactica* being pretty much my first show after I started doing acting, if you get known in a certain genre then not only is it easier to book jobs in the genre – because you made the effort with the fanbase, or people know of you – but also there are really good stories. A lot of science fiction is the 'what if', a lot of imagination and thinking to the future and that sort of thing, so there are some really fun stories.

And what is it that you look for in your roles?
If I deeply dislike a character then it's going to be hard to play them. That's not to say I wouldn't, as I've played serial killers, robbers, dirty lawyers [laughs] – not that they're people I admire, but if there's something in that character that I'm drawn to in either their complete lack of empathy, or they're a psychopath or a mother fighting for their children, whatever it may be. And I think also changing things up, being able to play different kinds of roles… if you only got to play the same types of roles all the time it would get a little stale, right? So certainly being able to try different types of roles.

And there's also what roles come to you: you are – as much as you like to think that you could play any type of role – bound by your physicality. I'm tall, so I'm not going to get put alongside somebody really short that's the lead, or if you're tall and have a strong voice or commanding presence then you're going to get roles, and people will overlook you for certain other types of roles. It's all part of the business, and where the business sees you and how far you can push these boundaries. That's the fun part: trying to push these boundaries and do different types of work.

> "WITH EDWARD JAMES OLMOS AND MARY MCDONNELL HELMING IT, THERE WAS STRENGTH TO THE BEGINNING"
> TRICIA HELFER

Obviously, many remember you for *Battlestar Galactica* – looking back, did you have any idea of how successful it would be when you first started?
I didn't! It was my first series, and it was almost my first role – I'd done a guest role on *CSI*, and one or two guest roles in a tiny indie movie or something. Everything was still new to me, but with Edward James Olmos [Admiral William Adama] and Mary McDonnell [President Laura Roslin], they are both extremely talented actors, in it for the love of the craft. With them helming it, there was a strength to the beginning of it. Eddie would tell us, "We're making something special here." We all remembered that, the younger generation, so to speak – we're not so young anymore! [laughs]. We always remember him saying that, and he was right.



Tricia Helfer played a number of roles in *Battlestar Galactica*, the show that made her name.

You played a number of different characters in *BSG* – how challenging was that experience, and who was your favourite to play?
When we started and we had the miniseries, I didn't know necessarily that it was going to involve multiple characters. In the first season I was mostly Number Six, but I didn't really know what had happened. I didn't know if Caprica became Number Six or if Number Six was something different at that time. In my head she was something different.

It wasn't until around Season Two during the Pegasus episodes that Gina came into play, and I remember talking to Ron Moore about it and saying, "I want to have her suffer from PTSD, and I want her to look different." In coincidental timing, my hair had fallen out in chunks while we were filming because I had to dye it white every ten days, so I was like, "Can I shave my head?" They said no, but the ratty, matted hair was my own, and that kind of led to them looking at allowing us to look different.

For me, I was extremely happy to have those episodes and start to have the different Sixes, because not only was it a challenge, but I was also getting a little bored playing Number Six, because I just felt like she was kind of limited – you didn't know much about her. She didn't have much of her own storyline, and it was getting a little tiring: how do we bring her in in different ways, as nobody else can see her? So it was fun to be able to get to play other characters. It made playing Number Six more fun after I got to branch out and play one with PTSD and play one who was more of a leader, like Sonya or Natalie in the later seasons. It was definitely a challenge, and a fun one. ⇨



Helfer with the rest of the cast of *Battlestar Galactica*.

"I LIKE THAT THE ENDING OF BATTLESTAR GALACTICA WASN'T WRAPPED UP IN A NICE LITTLE BOW"

TRICIA HELFER

Also, the ending divided people – what were your thoughts on it?
Probably a mixture! I really liked it, and I think it's different because it's hard to separate from viewing it and being in it, because we were basically breaking up a family after five years. We were shooting it with a lot more emotion attached to it personally, which is hard to separate. I'd actually have to go back and watch the series and have some distance from it, but what I did like about it was that it wasn't wrapped up in a nice little bow; it wasn't, "Bombs go off and everybody dies, blackout, depressing ending", and it wasn't hunky dory and perfect and wrapped in a bow. It was out in the middle, and I liked that, personally.

Subsequently, you worked on the likes of *Chuck*, *Supernatural* and *Community*. How were those?
It was great with all of those again; really nice teams. *Supernatural* and *Chuck* were just one episode, and *Community* as well – that was fun just to go a little crazy on Joel McHale [laughs], I had fun working with the people involved and playing those characters. I keep getting tweets about the *Supernatural* episode, people saying, "I was crying at the end when she goes, she didn't know she was the one who died…" It's really fun to be able to see that people are still enjoying them and that you brought something to the character that they remember and rewatch, or when other people see it for the first time. That's fun to see.

You also have various animation credits. What's the attraction of voiceover work?
You just get to play some really extreme characters that you don't get to play on screen as much – in *Starcraft*, I've got blades and wings! Or playing a robot, Black Cat in [*Spectacular*] *Spider-Man*, it's just fun. You get to go there and stand in a sound booth and just… it's so much imagination, on-camera work obviously involves a lot of imagination as well, but you're working off other people. With voiceover work, most of the time you are playing extreme characters, so it's almost more childlike in imagination. I do wish you got to work off other actors more often, but most of the time it's just like being a kid and pretending [laughs].

More recently, you starred in the final episode of *Falling Skies*, and also had a recurring role in *Powers*. How were they to work on?
That was fun – I really didn't work on *Falling Skies*, I was never up on the set or anything like that. [Executive producer] David Eick called me up, who I worked with on *Battlestar*, and said, "I need your voice." He told me I was voicing the Alien Queen – again that was more fun, it was like doing a voiceover because I was in a sound booth by myself. But I had a lot of fun, because I was





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Helfer loved working on Dan Harmon's *Community* alongside Joel McHale.









In addition to *BSG*, Helfer has shown up in *Supernatural* (below left) and *Ascension* (below right).

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talking to David and he was saying, "Okay, now I need you to say you're going to suck his blood!" It was a lot of fun, it was like, "Okay, now he's killing me!" I got to make fun sounds and pretend I was a bug.

With *Powers* it was fun. It was a great group of people, they had some troubles in their first season and made a lot of changes for the second season in terms of department heads and things like that, so they really revamped it, and I thought it looked very good.

My character was fun, because on a personal side note I'm a crazy cat lady, so when they called me up and offered me the show I was like, "Well, FBI character, what makes her tick?" and that sort of thing. I had to make sure she wasn't just, "I'm going to come in and tell you what to do then walk away." When they said she had powers herself, and her alter ego was a lynx, I was like, "You do know I have cat paw prints on my ankles right?" [laughs] I think I might have accepted the job just for the fact that I got to play a cat in one episode, or play cat-like in one episode! [laughs]

Aside from *Lucifer*, what's next for you?

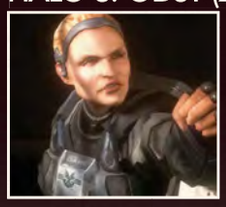
Lucifer's my focus right now – we've got quite a bit more filming to go. I've been trying to get projects going for a series based on a series of books called *Heartsick*, about a female serial killer in a love affair with the lead detective. It's a fascinating series of books – amazing in my perspective – by Chelsea Cain, but it's been hard. I'm not sure if that's going to manage to get going, or if it'll get revived by another team at some point. Hopefully it does, because it's a great story, and hopefully it gets to the screen at some point.

Battlestar Galactica is available to buy on DVD now, distributed by Universal Pictures UK.

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

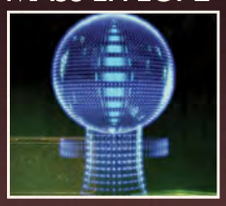
Helfer in the land of genre voiceover…

HALO 3: ODST (2009)



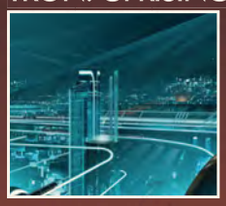
1 As UNSC Captain Veronica Dare, Helfer's character is transparently take-no-shit in outlook and formidable in the face of the enemy. You don't want to cross her.

MASS EFFECT 2



2 The Normandy Ship's AI – aka EDI – she plays a big role in helping the player along through the course of the game, a role expanded on in *Mass Effect 3*, where she actually gets a body.

TRON: UPRISING (2012)



3 Another disembodied role, in this underwatched animated series taking place between the events of *Tron* and *Tron Legacy* she voices the Grid itself, where its inhabitants do battle.

MORTAL KOMBAT X (2015)



4 In the tenth main instalment of the cult videogame beat 'em up Helfer played longstanding character Sonya Blade in what was yet another ass-kicking role for the actress.

RICK AND MORTY (2015)



5 Helfer reunited with Dan Harmon as Donna Gueterman, one half of an apparently idyllic couple who, in true *Rick And Morty* style, turn out to actually be killer robots.



Fingers crossed we'll see Helfer in many more genre roles in years to come.

SPACEBALLS

FLASHBACK



FLASHBACK

SPACEBALLS

STAR WARS SEND-UPS MAY BE COMMONPLACE NOWADAYS, BUT IT WAS MEL BROOKS WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR HELMING THE FIRST BONAFIDE FEATURE-LENGTH PARODY WITH SPACEBALLS. WE TALK TO ACTOR GEORGE WYNER AND PRODUCTION MANAGER ROBERT LATHAM BROWN ABOUT THE MAKING OF THE SIDE-SPLITTING CULT CLASSIC THAT GAVE US DARK HELMET, YOGURT, PIZZA THE HUTT AND MORE…

WORDS **OLIVER PFEIFFER**

Quite a long time ago (1987 to be precise), in a parallel fictional galaxy not so far away, came *Spaceballs*, Mel Brooks' arguably overdue *Star Wars* send-up that – having arrived four years following trilogy concluder *Return Of The Jedi* – was released not exactly on the heels of the then latest instalment of the globetrotting franchise it was attempting to target. But when you have the comedic genius that is Mel Brooks at the helm, among a cast of comedy veterans like John Candy and Rick Moranis, the logic behind the release becomes less relevant.

"It was the only genre I hadn't covered," recalls Brooks on the Blu-ray director's commentary. "I'd covered the western in *Blazing Saddles*, and the horror film with *Young Frankenstein*… [sci-fi] was like an untouched beautiful virgin for me to spoil!"

Although there are scene-specific references to other major science fiction franchises like *Star Trek*, *Planet Of The Apes* and *Alien*, it was George Lucas' original saga that *Spaceballs* (originally titled 'Planet Moran' until producers learnt of the Griff Rhys Jones/Mel Smith British comedy *Morons From Outer Space*) models itself on closely. From the philosophy of the Swartz to the ring-activated light swords, while not forgetting the exaggerated opening, which sees an imitation of the classic *Star Wars* story crawl, followed by a seemingly endless pan across prime antagonist Dark Helmet's starship, *Spaceballs* is smart at sending up the classic components of *Star Wars*. In fact, Brooks somewhat half-heartedly considered pushing that particular elongated shot even further.

"We thought, 'Why don't we do what they did in *Star Wars*, only to the [nth] degree – let's make the longest spaceship in the history of space movies,'" he teases on the commentary. "I wanted to do just that – for like an hour and a half of film – just have the ship never stop and just keep rolling."



"AS LONG AS THERE'S A NEW STAR WARS FILM THERE SEEMS TO BE A SPACE FOR SPACEBALLS"

GEORGE WYNER



The beat-out airborne Eagle 5 spacecraft nicely echoes the ramshackle look of the Millennium Falcon.

The apt exaggerations continued into the beautifully rendered production design too, particularly the impressively realised bridge of Dark Helmet's starship. "I remember walking onto it for the first time, and it was the real deal," says George Wyner, who played Helmet's right-hand man commander, Colonel Sandurz. "As an actor, you don't have to imagine it anymore. There's no, 'What would it be like if I were standing inside a big spaceship?' Well, you are, so just look around you!"

Equally grandiose was the hidden temple of golden-faced master-of-the-Swartz Yogurt, which was shot on the exact same soundstages where Dorothy and her friends meet the Wizard of Oz in the original 1939 classic, lending real potency to the scene where our four *Spaceballs* protagonists are confronted by the imposing fire and smoke-billowing temple. It also leads to one of the most knowing in-joke digs at Lucas' literal expense, where the diminutive Swartz wizard reveals his lucrative movie merchandising business: "Where the real money from the movie is made!"

Obviously, the miniscule Yogurt (played by a kneeling Brooks) is a take on Yoda, but what about those other overly familiar, less than subtlety inverted characters? With his cocky space-pirate sensibilities but Swartz-sensitive hero-on-the-rise destiny, protagonist Lone Starr (a fresh-faced Bill Pullman) is a clear amalgamation of both Han Solo and Luke Skywalker, while his furry humanoid sidekick Barf (John Candy) is a far less aggressive, fun-loving English-speaking twist on the ever-dependable Chewbacca. Even the duo's vehicle – a beat-out airborne Winnebago spacecraft dubbed Eagle 5 – nicely echoes the ramshackle characteristics of the Millennium Falcon.

Completing the group is the naturally feisty love interest Princess Vespa (Daphne Zuniga), and her ever-watchful neutral-faced female robotic companion Dot Matrix (voiced by Joan Rivers), who cleverly resembles ⇨

SPACEBALLS
FLASHBACK



Breaking the fourth wall was all part of the fun in this Star-studded homage.

Ralph McQuarrie's early conceptual drawings for C-3PO, while Dick Van Pattern plays Vespa's penny-pinching father, King Roland of Planet Druidia.

But it's arguably the bad guys that get the biggest laughs, and for good reason too. On the dark side of the Swartz, vertically challenged original *Ghostbusters* star Rick Moranis immortalises the hilariously unintimidating bespectacled prime antagonist Dark Helmet – who is forever lifting his visor to break the fourth wall and have a petty gripe about the current situation – while Brooks takes on the additional role of goofball President Skroob. Playing the all-important 'second banana' to these comedic geniuses is Wyner as the loyal, ever dependable Sandurz. (a riff on Kentucky Fried Chicken founder Colonel Sanders, in case you didn't know.)

"The second banana's job isn't to be funny; it's to set up the jokes for the comic," explains Wyner. "My job was kind of like a waiter serving food, and you just hand it to the comic, and you set up the joke. If you get some laughs while doing it then great!"

Whenever Sandurz shares the screen with either Skroob or Dark Helmet the chemistry between the actors is terrifically palpable. One of the most memorable in-joke moments of madcap mayhem occurs when the character unintentionally bursts in on Dark Helmet playing with his *Spaceballs* action figures. "No, I didn't see you playing with your dolls again!" is the hysterical response Sandurz gives when an embarrassed Dark Helmet nervously asks whether he saw anything.

"I spoke to Mel Brooks quite recently, and he said he was looking at different clips from his films, and he happened to be looking at *Spaceballs* and that particular clip, and he was still laughing!" shares Wyner. "That was the case where there was a lot going on with the second banana, because he's intimidated by the first banana. Dark Helmet is the boss, and Colonel Sandurz is the underling, so you want to bring that energy to it, and that 'Oh my God – I'm gonna get fired!' kind of attitude to that moment."

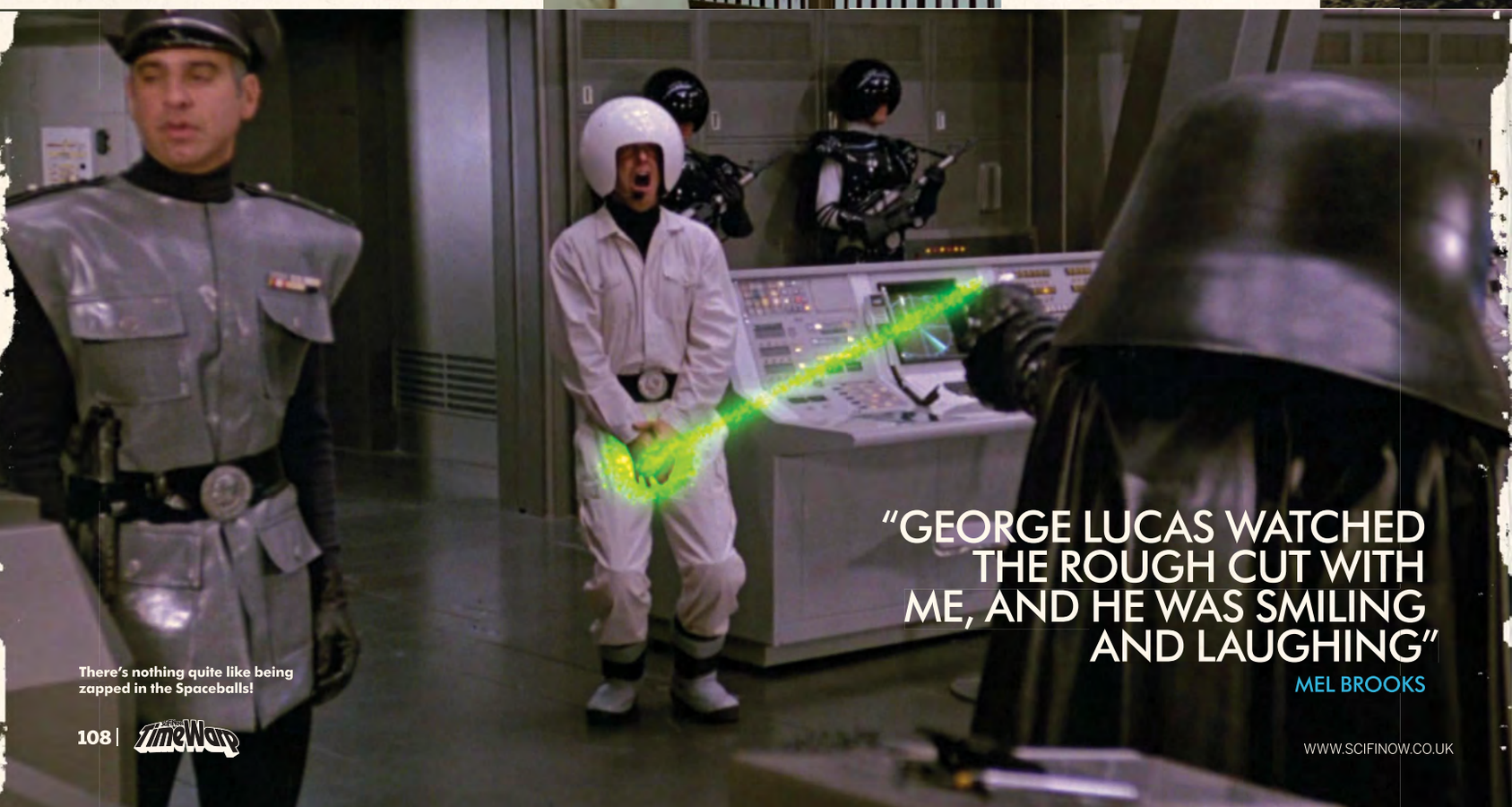
Keeping a straight face amid the pratfalls proved understandably difficult for the actor. "We laughed our way through that movie," admits Wyner, who got the gig after working on previous Mel Brooks comedy, *To*







Princess Vespa (Daphne Zuniga) was always giving Lone Starr the cold shoulder.



There's nothing quite like being zapped in the Spaceballs!

"GEORGE LUCAS WATCHED THE ROUGH CUT WITH ME, AND HE WAS SMILING AND LAUGHING"
MEL BROOKS



"It's true. All of it!" Han Solo/Luke Skywalker hybrid Lone Starr finally reaching out to 'Use the Swartz!'



Be Or Not To Be. "When you do a film with Mel, you're doing a comedy and you're going to laugh, and if you lose it and ruin the scene because you're laughing, Mel will probably end up laughing with you! He'd say, 'We're making a comedy. It's funny – so go ahead and let's just laugh!'"

The actor has fond memories of working alongside his other diminutive co-star too, who had a convenient way of shielding his sniggers. "What I got a real kick out of was the size of Dark Helmet's helmet!" laughs Wyner. "Rick was under this ten-gallon helmet, and when he started to lose it he would drop the visor so no one could see him laughing, and now I'm out there laughing by myself! I would look at his knees, and they would be shaking because he was laughing so much, but no one could see it. He kind of left me out to hang, but it was great fun."

Luckily, George Lucas also saw the funny side to this affectionate send-up of his entire franchise. "[He] was never offended by the satire. His largesse was very appreciated," comments Brooks on the DVD commentary. "He watched the rough cut with me, and he was smiling and laughing."

It's arguably the continuation of the *Star Wars* saga that has kept *Spaceballs* alive and relevant throughout the decades. "It's a film that doesn't go away, and I love it for that," Wyner considers. "As long as there's a new *Star Wars* film there seems to be a place for *Spaceballs*. It's fun – young people can enjoy the size of Rick's helmet and John Candy's tail and some of the slapstick stuff that we do, while young adults can enjoy some of the jokes that perhaps young kids wouldn't get."

In more recent times, talk has turned to a *Spaceballs* sequel of its own, fuelled by the mysterious circulation of a teaser poster promising *Spaceballs: The Search For More Money*, which was amusingly referenced by Yogurt himself in the original film. Released around the same time as *The Force Awakens* hit cinemas, the poster features a melted Dark Helmet that amusingly rifts off the eerie visage of Dark Vader's recovered helmet in the seventh chapter of the series. But is this all just a load of old space balls?

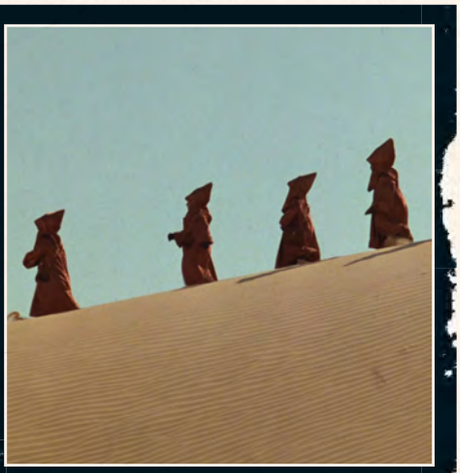
"I've heard Mel talk about it, but I can't answer for him. My guess would be probably not at this point," offers Wyner. "I know when [*The Force Awakens*] came out there was a lot of talk on the Internet: 'Oh, they're gonna do another *Spaceballs*!' I think it's tempting for Mel, and I can't see why it wouldn't be, as we had so much fun. I can tell you that I would really enjoy getting together with everyone again!"



Spaceballs is available to buy on DVD and Blu-ray now, distributed by 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment.



Among other sci-fi classics riffed on is the iconic twist ending to the original *Planet Of The Apes*.



BUDGETING SPACEBALLS

Production manager David Latham Brown reveals his experience working on the set

You were dubbed 'Mr On-Budget' by Mel Brooks due to your ability to get the most value out of your resources.
Well, it helped that Mel was the producer, as he was very conscious of the cost. He had this great idea to have a scene where Dark Helmet gets tangled up in an automatic feeding machine just like Charlie Chaplin does in *Modern Times*. He asked what it would cost, and I worked it out as about $50,000. He said, "It's $25K funny, but not $50K funny!"

You were also the production manager on *Return Of The Jedi*. How did these two productions compare from a budgeting perspective?
Spaceballs was a lot less expensive than *Jedi*. Mel had this idea to do a satire of the *Star Wars*/*Star Trek* movies. He told Alan Ladd Jr, who was head of MGM at the time. Alan liked it, and asked how much it was going to cost, and [Mel] said $17 million. That's how we ended up with the budget.

The production designer, Terry Marsh, was brilliant at being able to get value out of money. We shot the 'combing the desert' sand dunes scene in Yuma, Arizona, which was close to the location of Jabba the Hutt's barge in *Jedi*. But when Daphne Zuniga (Princess Vespa) was sitting in the desert with Bill Pullman, that was actually on a stage. I remember Mel and I driving to that stage, and there was a skip loader dumping sand. Mel stopped the car, got out and went over to the driver. He looked in the bucket and said, "It's not full enough. You've got to fill it more – more sand on each trip. I don't want you doing this all day long!" and got back into the car! [laughs]

What was it like working with Mel? I assume he kept things free and funny...
Yes, but he takes it very seriously too. When you meet Mel he makes you feel like you've known him forever and that he's your best friend. I don't think I've worked with anybody who's acted on a Mel Brooks film that hasn't been a really nice person either. Mel doesn't work with prima donnas.

How do you feel that *Spaceballs* holds up today?
I think it holds up remarkably well. The strange thing about Mel's movies is when they first come out they seem like really goofy comedies, and they get better as they get older. Mel likes me on his pictures, as I laugh at everything he's doing, because I just find it very funny! It's a strange phenomenon that his pictures seem to me to age very well. I don't know if it's the culture that changes to reflect the movie or what, but it's certainly something I've noticed.

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NACHOS

1. What is Will Graham's FBI job title at the start of Season One?
2. Who suffers from Cotard delusion?
3. Who does Hannibal Lecter kill after they break into his basement?
4. What illness does Will develop in Season One?
5. Which character owns a dog named Applesauce?

BURGERS AND FRIES

6. What is the real name of the Minnesota Shrike?
7. Which website does Freddie Lounds work for?
8. Which FBI agent goes missing while investigating the Chesapeake Ripper?
9. What name does Jack Crawford's wife Phyllis go by?
10. What is the real name of the serial killer known as the Tooth Fairy?

STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING

11. Whose identity does Hannibal steal while he is living in Italy, and what was his occupation?
12. What is the name of Mason and Margot Verger's family estate?
13. Why did Dr Chilton switch his speciality from surgery to psychiatry?
14. Which of Abigail Hobbs' body parts does Hannibal feed to Will in order to frame him for her murder?
15. What type of fantastical creature usually stalks Will while he is experiencing a psychotic episode?

DRESSING ON THE SIDE

16. How many episodes of *Hannibal* are there?
17. Who created the series?
18. What is the name of the character played by comedian Eddie Izzard?
19. What does Bedelia Du Maurier eat during the post-credits scene after the series finale?
20. Which two actors portrayed Mason Verger?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

HANNIBAL LECTER

No matter where you are, you're always the most informed person in the room. This isn't always a good thing, but it works in your favour. Whether you win or lose, things tend to get a little messy.

11-15

FREDDIE LOUNDS

You had hoped that snooping around telling lies would eventually pay off, and finally it has! It's best not to ask where you got your information from. It doesn't bode well to reveal too much about yourself.

6-10

WILL GRAHAM

When you're used to being on the cusp of genius and insanity, it hurts a lot more when you fall. Enthusiasm just turns into obsession whenever you try something new. It's exhausting.

0-5

FREDERICK CHILTON

Nothing goes right for you. But rather than having your kidney cut out and being shot in the face, you've just failed a dumb quiz at the back of a magazine. It could be worse.

ANSWERS: **1.** SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR **2.** GEORGIA MADCHEN **3.** BEVERLY KATZ **4.** ENCEPHALITIS **5.** ALANA BLOOM **6.** GARRET JACOB HOBBS **7.** TATTLECRIME.COM **8.** MIRIAM LASS **9.** BELLA **10.** FRANCIS DOLARHYDE **11.** DR FELL, A MUSEUM CURATOR **12.** MUSKRAT FARM **13.** HE ACCIDENTALLY KILLED A PATIENT **14.** HER EAR **15.** A WENDIGO **16.** 39 **17.** BRYAN FULLER **18.** DR ABEL GIDEON **19.** HER OWN LEG **20.** MICHAEL PITT AND JOE ANDERSON

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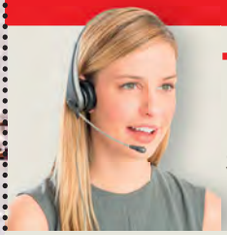
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